

Age-friendly North Reading: A Community Needs Assessment

October 2021

Commissioned by the Town of North Reading

Introduction

- Welcome
- Media options
- Ad hoc Age Friendly Team
- Dr. Caitlin Coyle, UMass Boston
- Thank you
- Agenda

Primary Data and Reference Sources

- 2016 NR Short Term Main St Economic Development Strategy 2016 MAPC & CPC, 3? Forums
- 2018 North Reading Housing Production Plan MAPC & CPC, 806 survey, 2? Forums
- 2019 North Reading Master Plan 2020 – 2030 MAPC & CPC, 554 survey, 4 workshops, 15 Member Advisory Board
- 2021 Age Friendly NR: A Community Needs Assessment UMass Boston, 1,350 survey, 3 forums
- Roadmap to Livability AARP Livable Communities, WHO
- 10 Year Research Project? COA, CIT et al, EDC, CPC, LUC, SB

CPC Community Planning Commission
MAPC Metropolitan Area Planning Council

COA > CIT/SSAT > NRSAT/ACT > EDC > SB



Concurrent CPC, FMPC and SB?



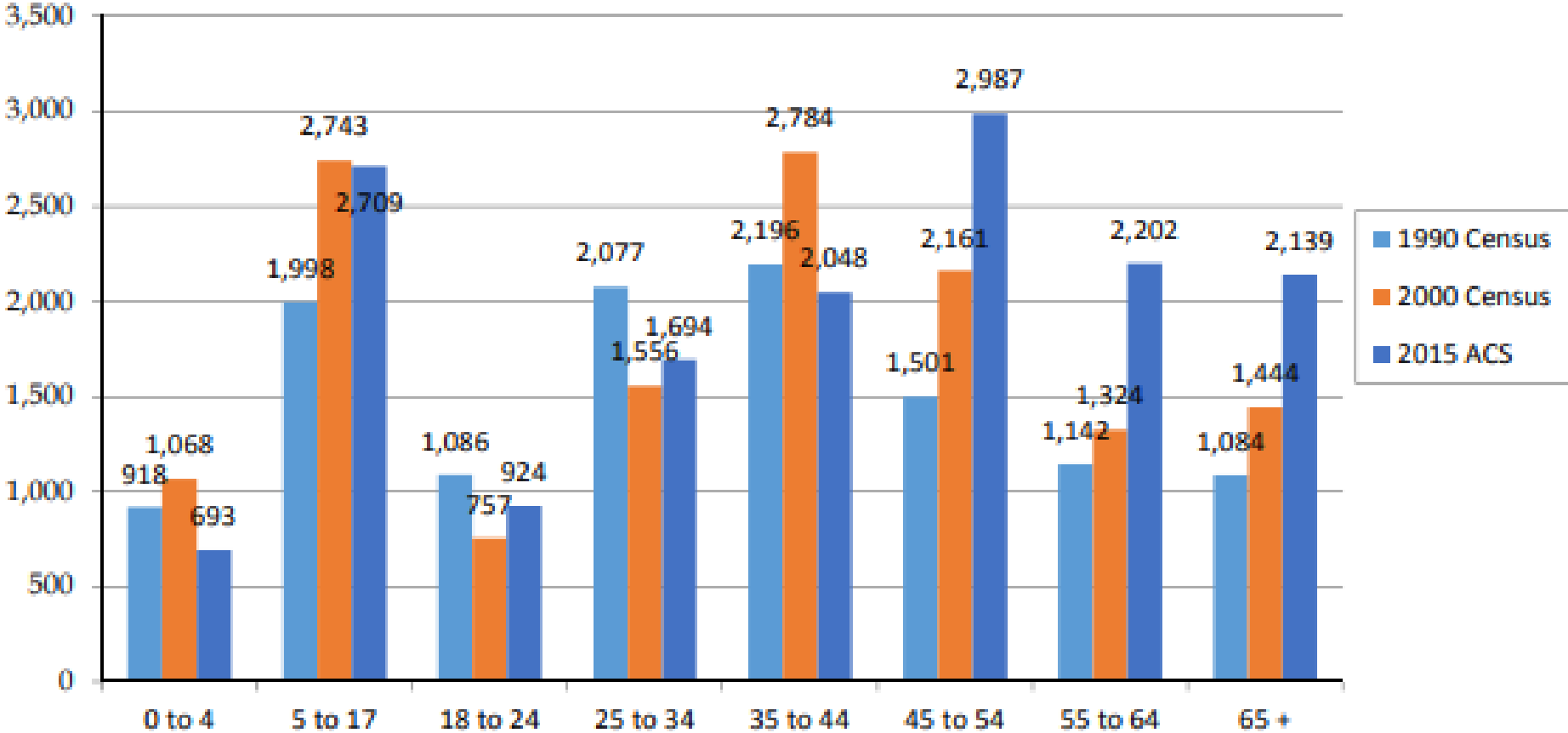
Key Concept: The 3 Universal Truths

The 3 Universal Truths of Happiness as we get older?

1. People want to live in their **homes** for as long as they possibly can.
2. People want to stay connected to their family, friends and **community**.
3. People want to lead a life of **purpose**, regardless of their age or ability.

Key Concept: Demographics

Figure 3-2: Changes in Age Distribution: 1990 to 2015



Key Concept: Demographic Trends

- **National Trend (age 65+):**
 - 1 out of 5 people by 2030
 - Age 65 and older will exceed 18 and younger by 2035
- **North Reading Trend:**
 - 2 out of 5 residents by 2035, 40% or 6,400 out of 16,000
 - We were at 1,500 (10%) out of 15,000 in 2010
 - Fastest growing demographic change in MA
 - Meanwhile school enrollment has remained flat around 2,400
- **Good News!** The growth in Seniors is good news for our town!

Key Concept: Fiscal Concerns

School Expenses

▪ FY 2018 Spending per Pupil		\$16,000
▪ Avg Household Property Tax		= <u>\$9,000</u>
▪ % budget municipal	33%	\$3,000
▪ % budget for schools	67%	\$6,000
▪ <u>1 Child Household Property Tax</u>		= <u>\$24,000 to break even</u>
▪ % budget municipal	33%	\$8,000
▪ % budget for schools	67%	\$16,000

Bottom Line

- households without children are major benefactors in underwriting the cost of schools for the benefit of the households with children.
- The myth that seniors are drawing higher resources from the town is simply not true.

Key Concept: Changing the Conversation



8,000 Days

January 2, 2020 | By Joseph F. Coughlin, PhD | RETIREMENT SATISFACTION | MIT AGELAB

- Four life cycle segments: Learning 0 – 22, Growing 22 – 44, Maturing 44 - 64, and then Exploring 64+
- The new age active generation expects more.
 - Continued engagement with working and volunteering
 - Time with family and friends
 - Leisure time and activities
 - Overall healthy perspective on life – optimistic
 - *Takeaway “The traditional view of retirement is outdated”.*
- 4 phases of Exploring
 1. Honeymoon -
 2. Big Decision Time -
 3. Navigating Longevity -
 4. Solo Journey Phase (typically women) -

Key Concept: Changing the Conversation

Seniors and Elderly references? (legally 60+ in MA)

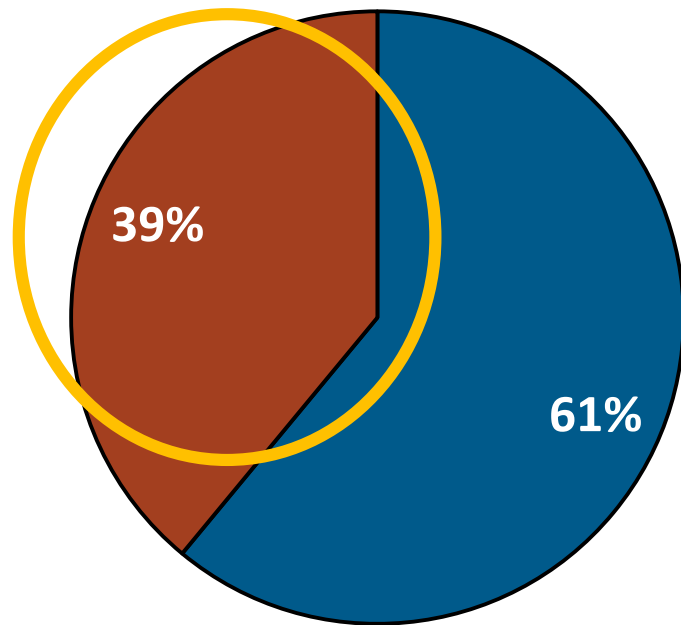
- **Active Seniors** Largest subcategory demographic
 - \$\$\$ Financially Secure
 - Still working and active
 - Can afford an empty nester household
 - Usually, part of the Sandwich generation
- **Solo Agers** 500 households out of 5,000
 - Live alone, sometimes where 1+1 =1?
 - \$\$ Less financially secure
 - More isolated
- **Elderly** Smallest part of the Senior demographic
 - \$ fixed income and “overhoused”
 - Health and daily living issues
 - Isolated, need services incl. transportation
 - COA Elder Services plays a larger role

The hidden demographic of the “Rising Senior”

- Pre-empty nesters
- Usually in their 50s
- They find themselves in the MIT Honeymoon and Big Decision Time phase but are starting to ask the questions:
 - “Is there life after kids?”
 - “Do I stay, or do I go?”

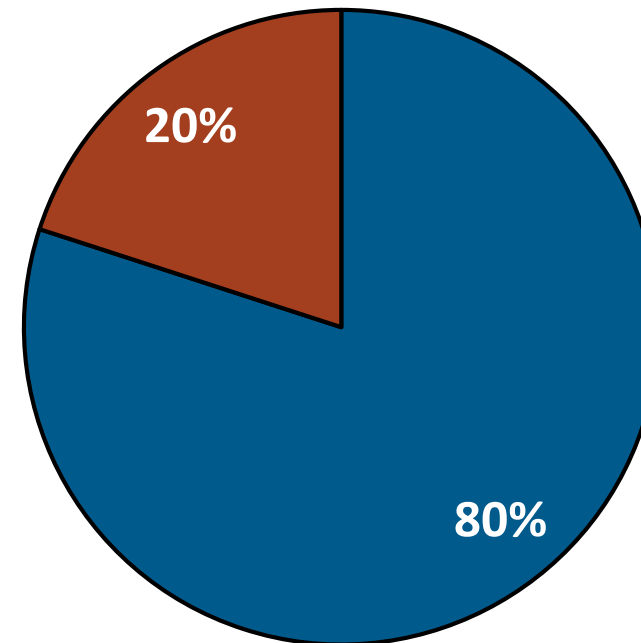
39% of respondents under age 60 do not find it important to remain in N. Reading as they age.

Under age 60



- Very/somewhat important
- Slightly/not at all important

Age 60+



- Very/somewhat important
- Slightly/not at all

AFT Goal: high quality of life for *all* NR Residents

- Let's embrace the **Rising Seniors** who are our future so that they and their families remain committed to our community.
- Let's recognize our current **Seniors** and embrace their energy, skill set and financial support while also providing the infrastructure and support that they need to thrive and stay in North Reading.
 - We are already recognized as being a leader in our school programming throughout MA
 - Let's become a leader in our age friendly programming, too.
 - It will take time, commitment and infrastructure to be successful.

"We already lost Tom Brady. Will we lose you, too?"

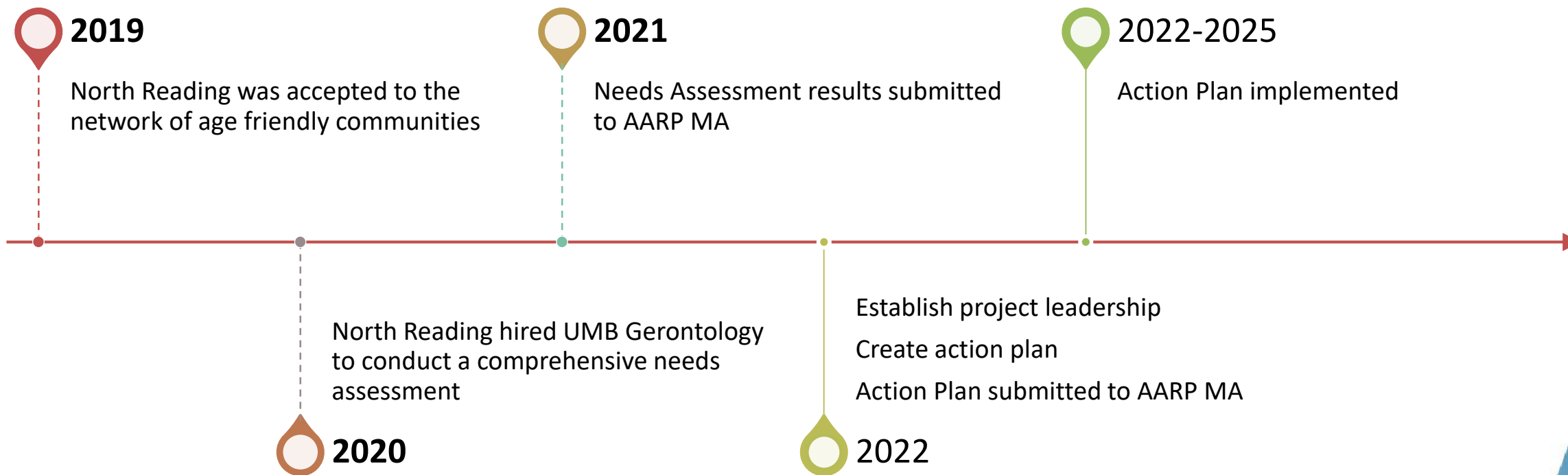


About Us

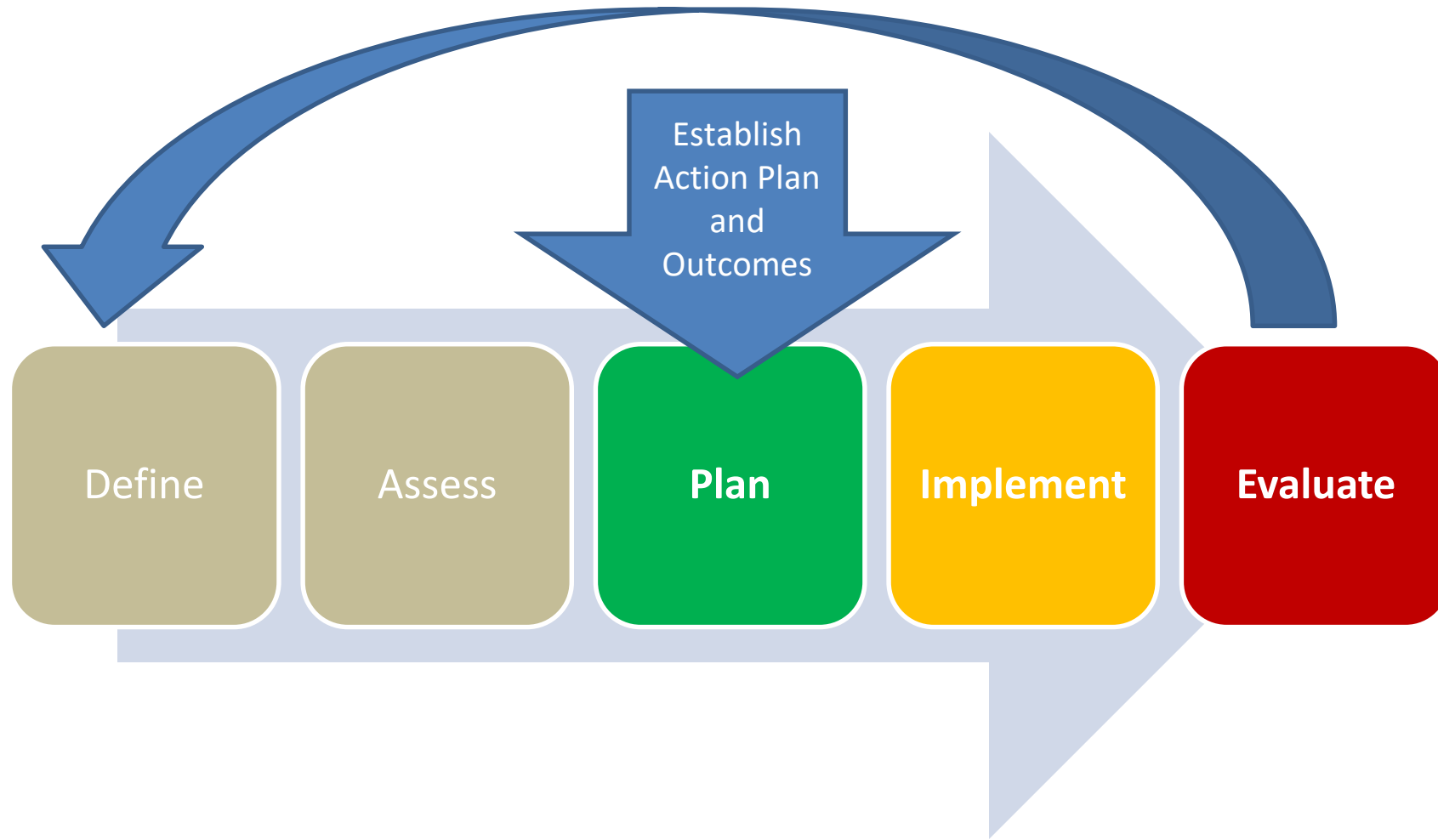
- **The Gerontology Institute (GI) at UMass Boston is the 2nd oldest academic program in gerontology in the U.S.**
- **Currently, 1 out of 4 PhDs in Gerontology are graduates of UMass Boston**
- **Since 2012, the Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging within the GI has contracted with nearly 50 cities and towns in MA to plan for the aging of their population**



Progress to-date and future plan



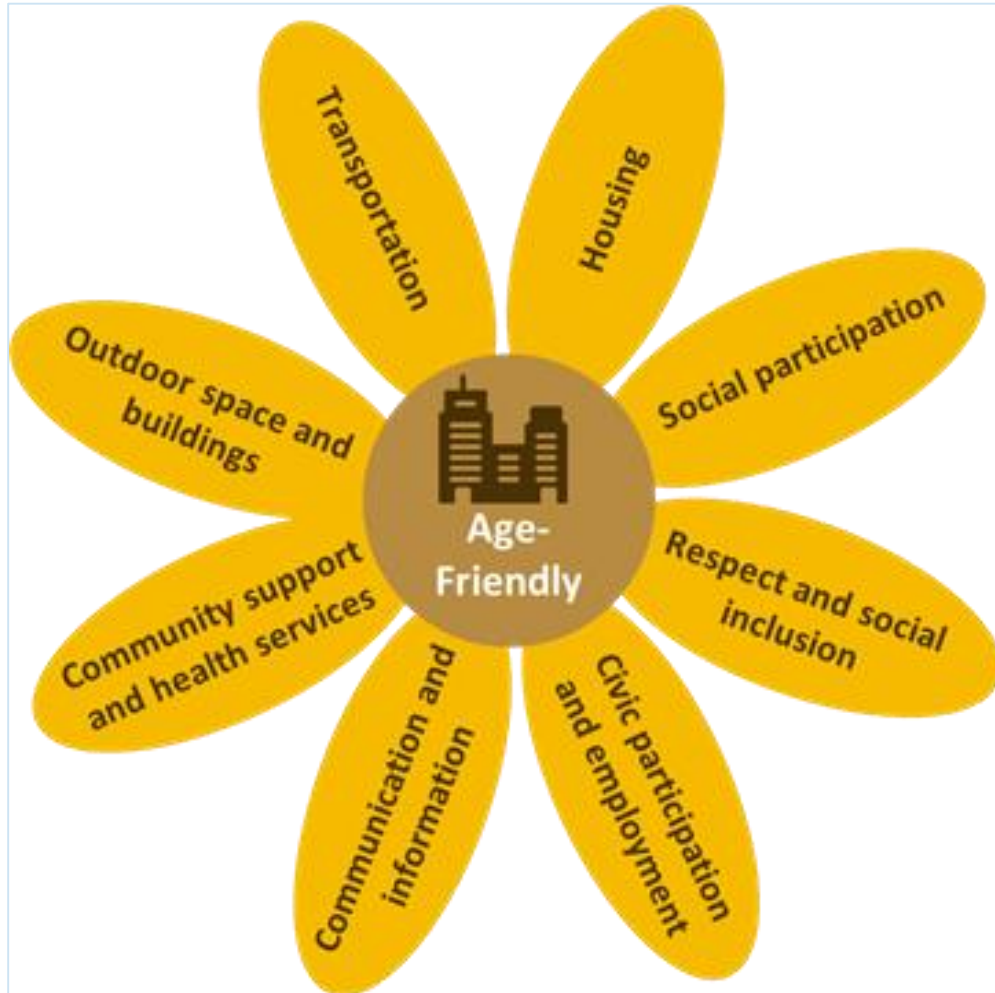
Five-year Age-Friendly Initiative



Purpose of this project:

- To generate information for the Town of North Reading to be used for:
 - **planning** for services, supports, and programs for residents of North Reading who are moving into older age now and in the future
 - the development and execution of North Reading's **Age-Friendly Initiative.**

WHO's Framework: 8 domains of an age friendly community



- Enables people of **all ages** to **actively participate in community activities** and **treats everyone with respect**, regardless of their age
- Makes it easy for older people to **stay connected** to people who are important to them
- Helps people **stay healthy** and provides **support to those who can no longer live independently**

Strategies for Learning about North Reading

- Review of existing data and reports
- Four Focus Groups (32 participants)
 - Residents: Current seniors
 - Residents: Rising seniors
 - Stakeholders
 - Mixed
- Eight Key-Informant Interviews
 - Town Administrator
 - Select Board member
 - Director of Elder Affairs
 - Youth Services Director
 - School Committee member
 - Town Planner
 - Police Chief
 - Fire Chief

*results are presented as a synthesis of all sources of information

Survey Response

- Resident Survey (age 55+)
- N=1,393 (28% Response rate)
 - Comparatively, this is considered a high response

	Age distribution of survey respondents	Response rate
55-59	17%	24%
60-69	38%	24%
70-79	30%	35%
80+	15%	30%
Total	100%	28%

Cross-Cutting Theme: Affordability and Economic Security

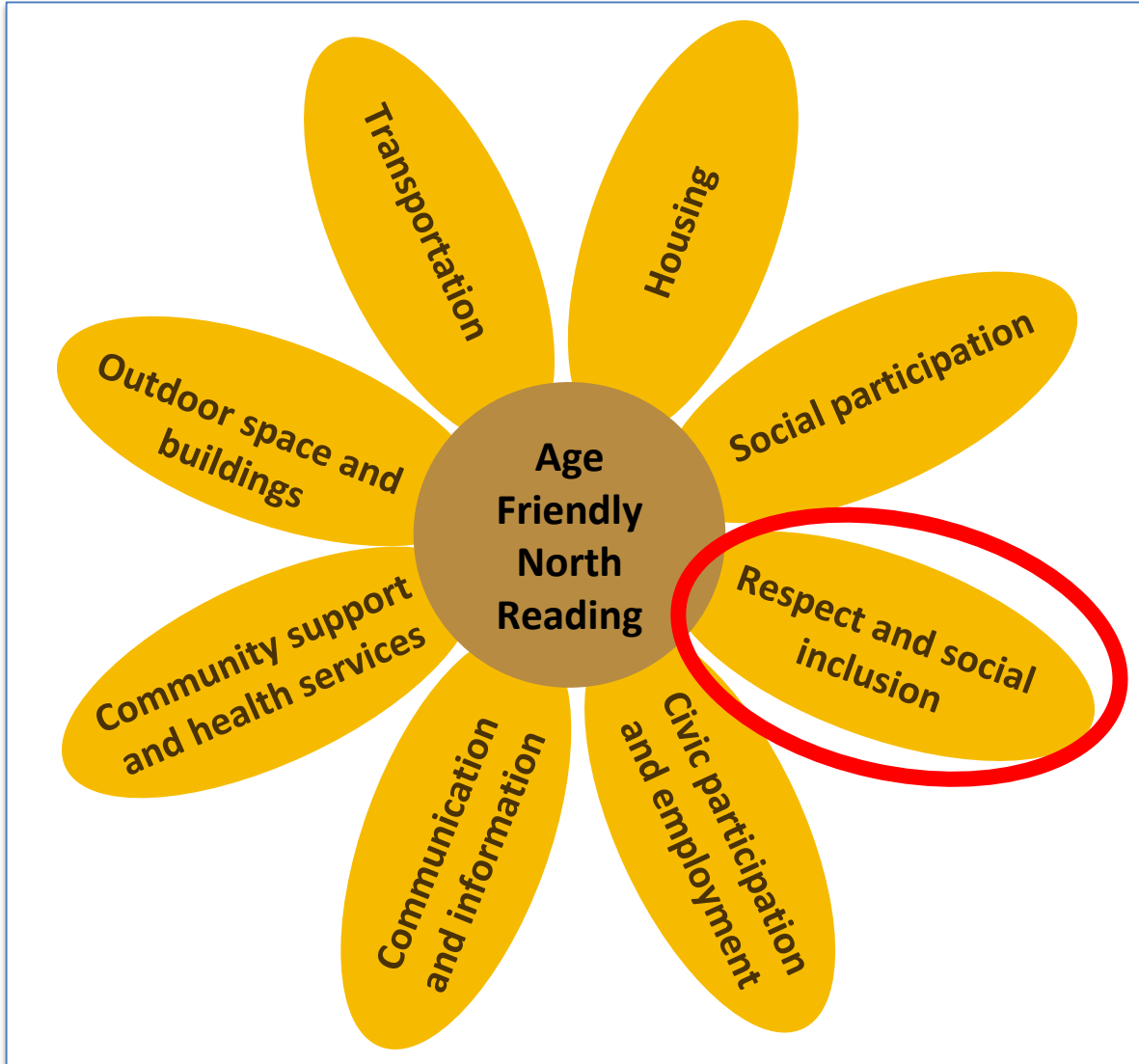
Community Input

- **Cost of living**, namely property taxes, was the greatest concern about being able to stay in town for **more than half** of the survey respondents.
- **Economic insecurity** reported by **14%** of respondents; as well; **15%** of residents age **65+** report a median income of less than **\$25,000/year**
- Respondents do not perceive of **affordable downsizing options** in North Reading

Ideas for Action

- Consider opportunities to **reduce property taxes** for those needing assistance. For example:
 - **Freeze property taxes** for those over a certain age.
 - **Expand access** to existing property tax relief programs by raising the income limit for the tax work-off program.
 - Ensure that those who are already eligible for existing programs are **aware** of how to apply.

RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION



Respect & Social Inclusion: Needs

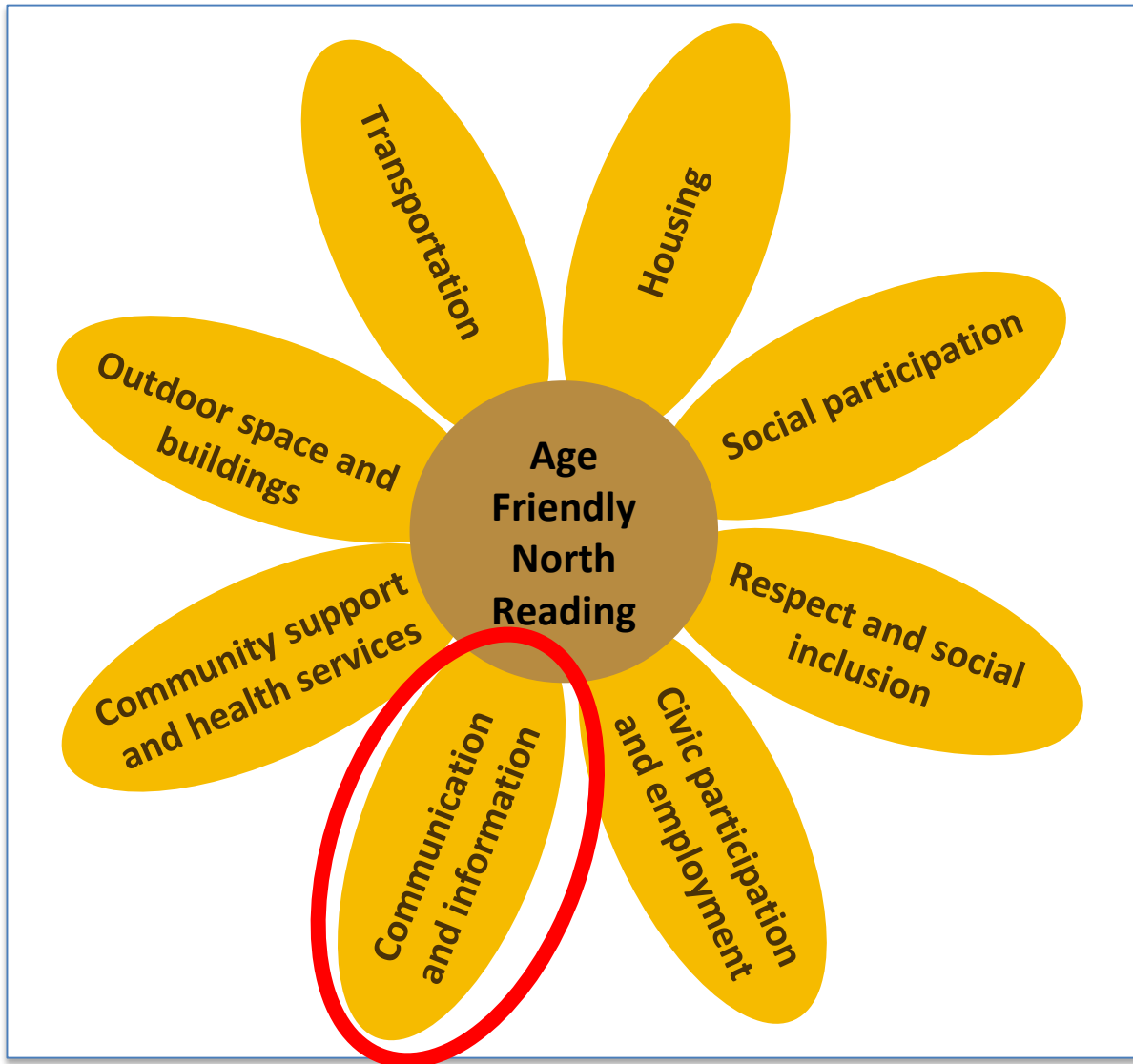
- From focus groups and interviews: older adults are not viewed as a priority in North Reading
 - Reflected in lack of action on housing, transportation, services and activities
- 30% of respondents are only slightly or not at all satisfied with the extent to which local policymakers take into account the interests and concerns of older residents
- Only 11% of respondents feel that they have felt excluded in North Reading
 - Most commonly reported reason for feeling excluded is age

Respect & Social Inclusion: Ideas for Action

- Establish precedent that **Town boards and committees**
 - include both younger and older residents.
- Organize an **intergenerational day of service** to tackle a community issue together
- Consider adopting some **dementia-friendly practices** to acknowledge the burden that the disease puts on families
 - Explore the adoption of a “[purple table](#)” program at local restaurants/cafes or a “[purple pew](#)” day of recognition by local faith communities.

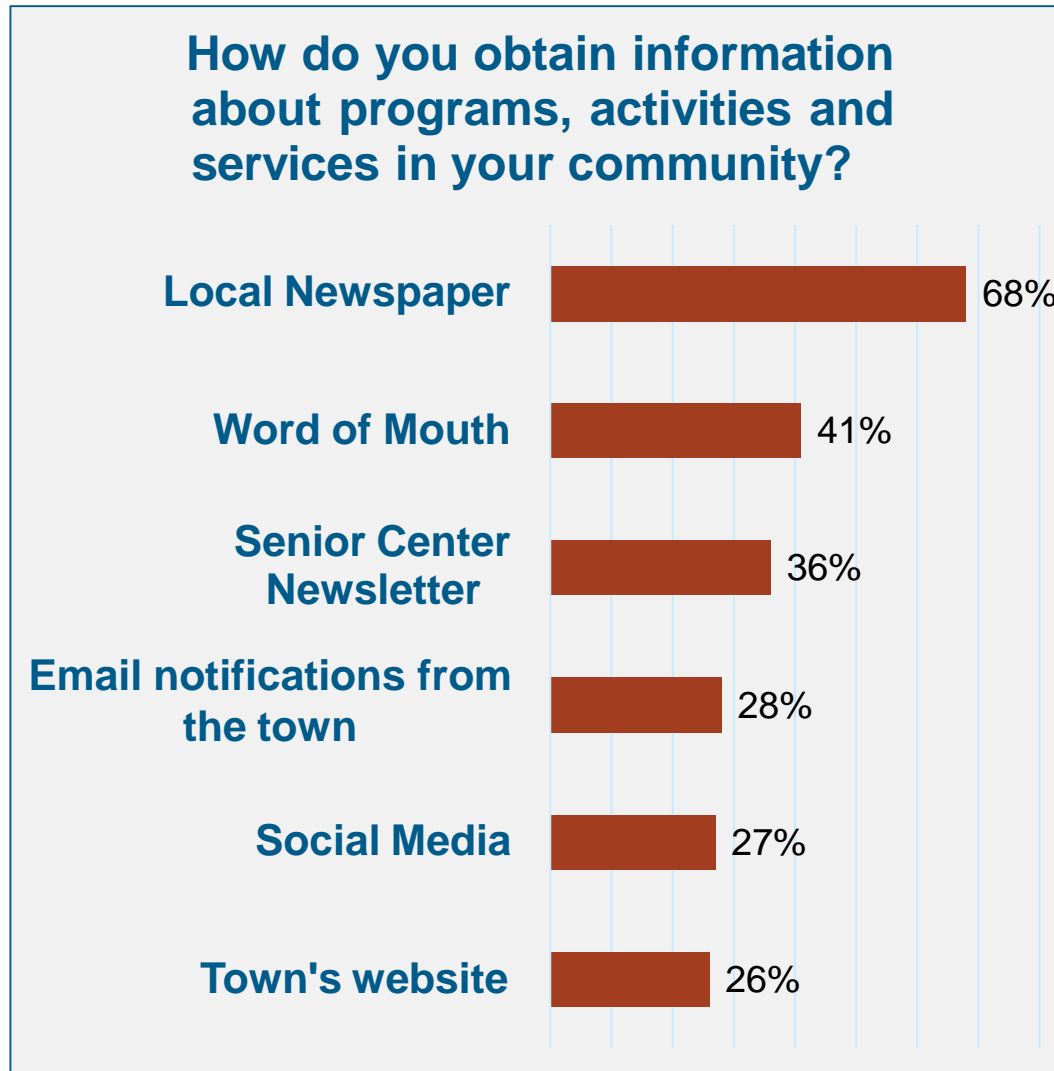
Age Friendly Team (AFT): Ideas for Action

- Create a **new Age Friendly Task Force** (partial responsibilities below)
 - include both younger and older residents
 - Help drive the age-friendly initiative
 - Change the conversation
- Create a **new Adult Learning Committee**
 - Connect seniors to the schools and library, and library and schools to the seniors
 - Create a “Treehouse” type arrangement
 - Offer Adult Education
- Create a **new Volunteer Committee**
 - Actively recruit Rising and Age-Active Seniors to serve on various town committees
 - Host an annual Volunteer Open House day and Recognition Gala.



COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

Communication & Information: Needs



- **47%** of respondents do **not know who to contact** in North Reading if they or someone in their family needed help accessing social, municipal, or health services.
- **16%** of respondents age **80+ do not have Internet access** at home.

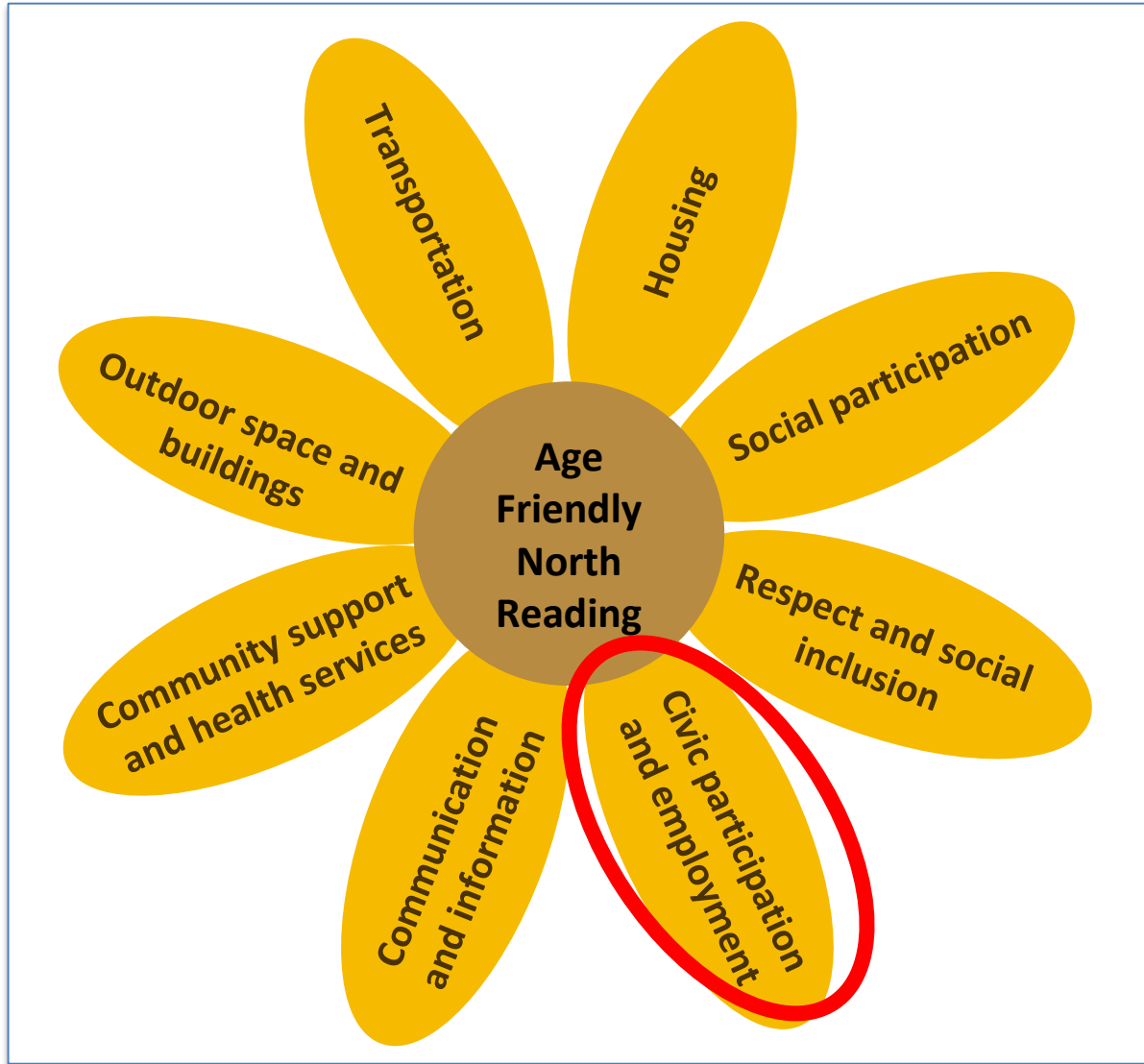
“People do not want or read or hear information until there is a problem and they need it. Many are not sure where to turn when things go wrong.”

- Stakeholder Interview

Communication & Information: Ideas for Action

- Convene local **health and human services stakeholders** bi- annually or quarterly to exchange perspectives and approaches to outreach.
- Begin a campaign to **build visibility for CIT's Resource Guide**.
- Consider expanding **learning opportunities** for digital communication and technology use. **AFT: Adult Learning Committee**
- Regularly **publish town-wide information** in bulletins and newsletters utilizing all local TV, cable, in-print news, radio, Town website, Facebook/SM.
- Consider including news features in the **local newspaper** about the age-friendly effort or senior issues in general [e.g., in the Salem News, the 1st Friday of each month includes Salem for All Ages Feature (800-word article, opinion piece)]

AFT: COA, new Age Friendly Director, and new Age Friendly Task Force



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & EMPLOYMENT

Civic Engagement & Employment: Needs

- **54%** of survey respondents are **retired**. **22%** plan to retire in the next 5 years
- **65%** agree that there are **ample opportunities** to participate in **local government**, and **52%** believe there are **opportunities to volunteer**
- **41%** agree that there are volunteer **opportunities at local schools**

“There is a tremendous amount of untapped social, intellectual, and community capital in North Reading.”

- Focus Group Participant

“Help educate newcomers in how we can be productive members of our new town. I love living in North Reading and want to contribute.”

- Survey Respondent

Civic Engagement & Employment: Ideas for Action

- Designate a group of **resident advocates** who will consistently attend board and committee meetings to **raise awareness of senior issues**

AFT: Age Friendly Task Force

- As more residents begin to retire, consider ways for them to get connected with **volunteer opportunities** and post-retirement **work**

- Consider hosting a “retirement fair” and invite residents who have recently turned 65 as well as business and local organizations seeking part time employees or volunteers.

AFT: Volunteer Committee

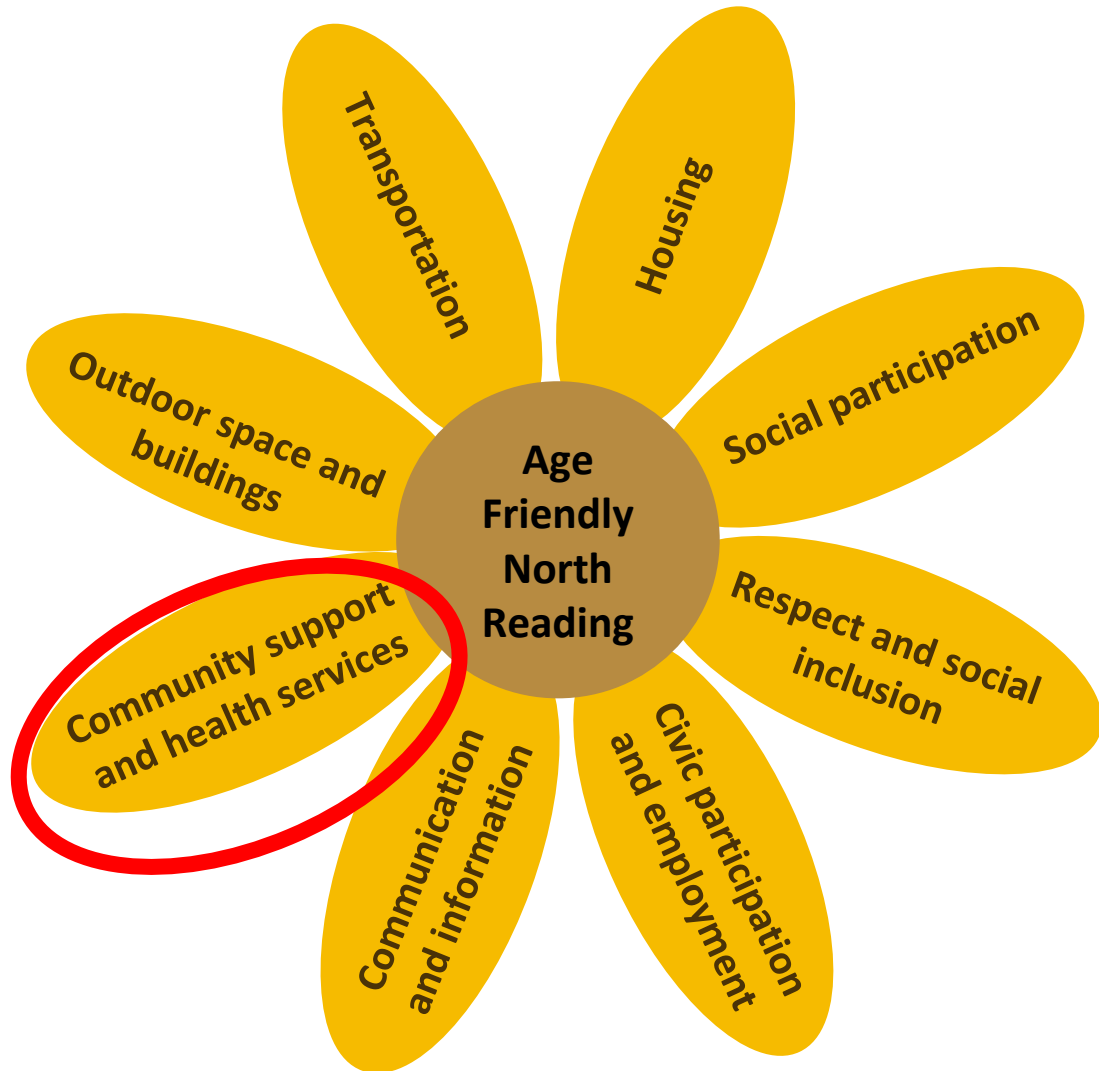
- **Expand programming** around **retirement planning** or finding a post-retirement **job**

AFT: Adult Learning Committee

- Develop a “**citizens leadership academy**” to educate residents of all ages about municipal processes and encourage their involvement

AFT: Volunteer Committee

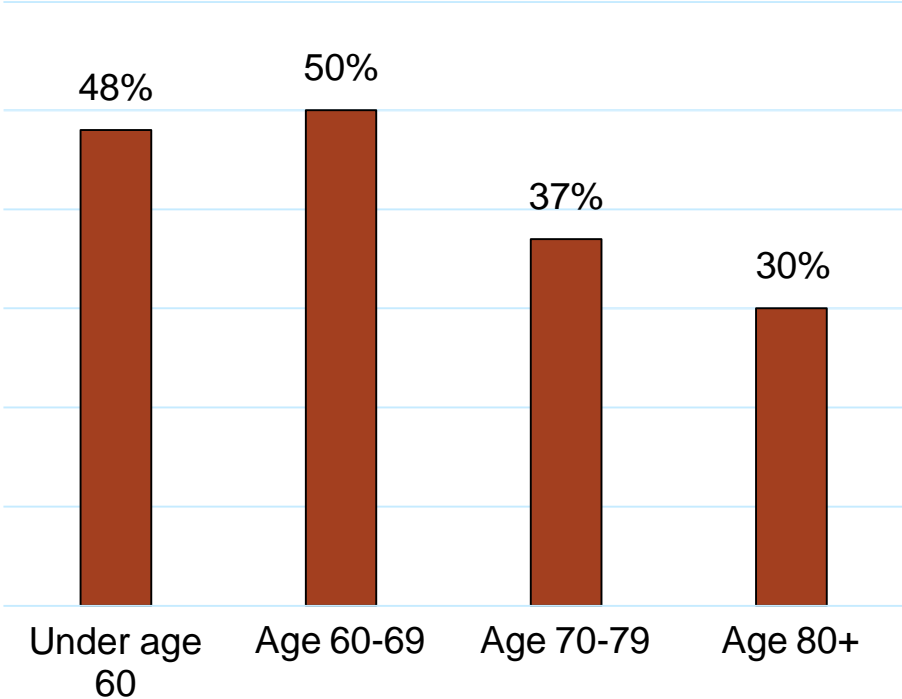
COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES



Community Support & Health Services

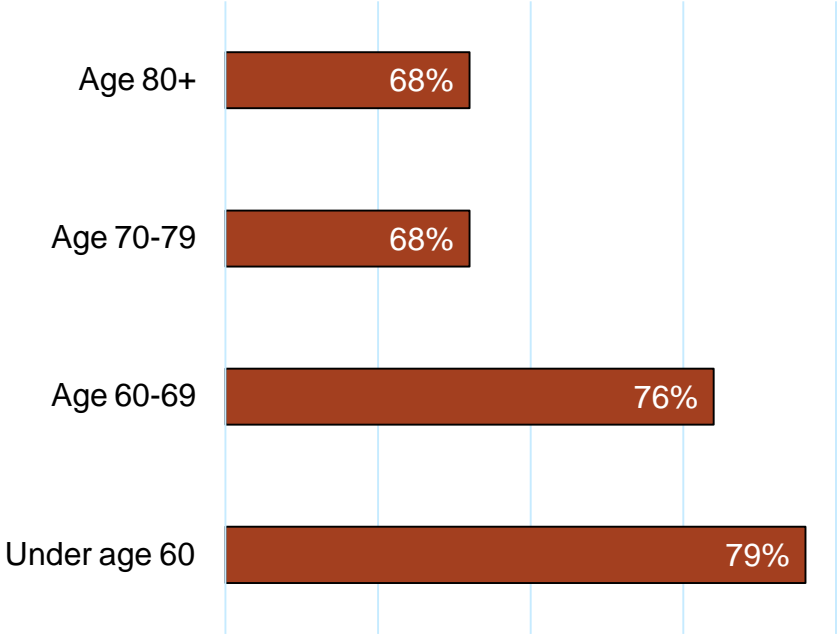
Many residents are caregivers

% caregiving in the past 5 years

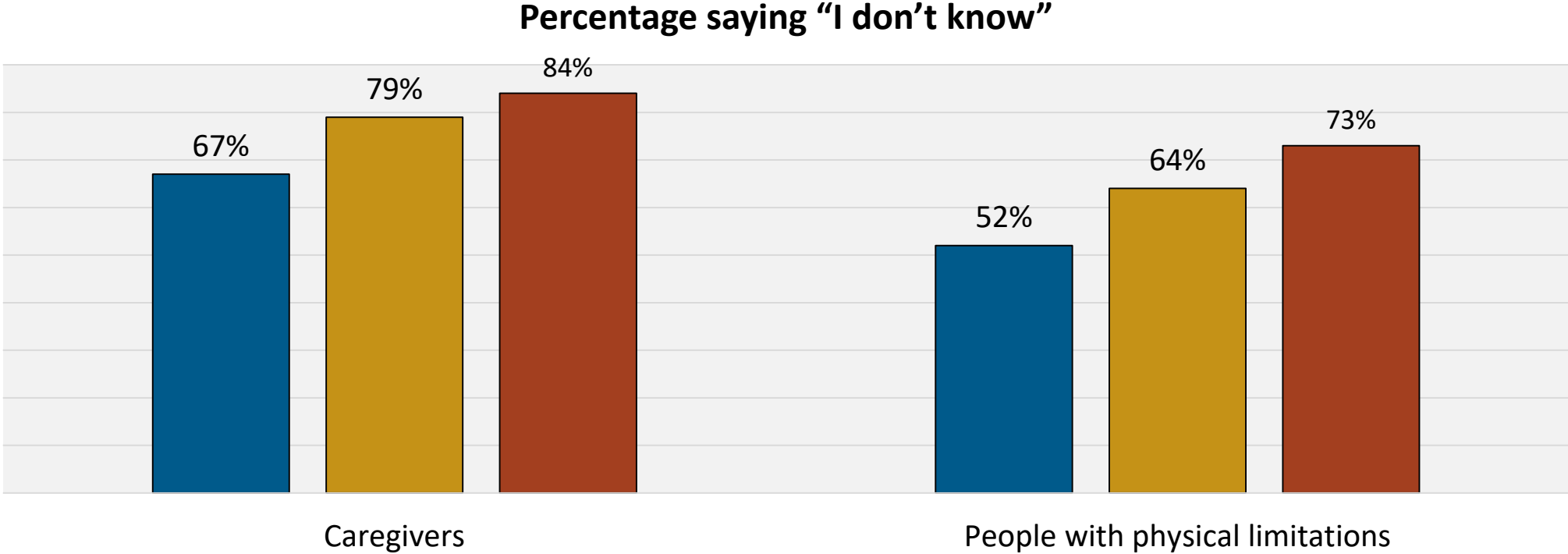


Caregiving is challenging

% saying “very or somewhat challenging”



Even those who could use community support & health services don't know about them



- Quality of social services
- Satisfaction with homemaking or home health aide services
- Satisfaction with caregiver support

Community Support & Health Services: Ideas for Action

- Improve community knowledge about **available services**.
 - While broadening awareness overall, take special efforts to improve awareness and access to those who could benefit from services, especially those with participation limitations or who are providing care to someone. **AFT: Project 500 Committee/COA**
- Host a “**crash course in caregiving**” to provide families with necessary information about services and supports. **AFT: Project 500 Committee/COA**
AFT: Adult Education
- Despite the presence of a mental health coordinator in N. Reading, consider a **public awareness campaign** (e.g., Mental Health Mondays—covering a topic a week via FB Live or local cable) to ensure residents are aware of this (and other) resources. **AFT: Project 500 Committee/COA**
AFT: Adult Education
- Identify **private spaces** in the Senior Center or other department/building for confidential conversations relating to care needs, benefits counseling, and other sensitive topics.



OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings: Needs

- Respondents are generally satisfied with
 - Handicap accessibility of walkways, public buildings and businesses
 - Walking paths and trails
 - Signage and wayfinding
- More dissatisfaction expressed with
 - Availability of benches and shaded seating
 - Availability of public restrooms
- A large share “do not know” → lack of awareness is common

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings: Ideas for Action

- Implement community **walk audits** to identify barriers to walkability and possible locations for additional shelter, seating, and/or curb cutouts.

AFT: Commission on Disabilities

- Explore **outdoor programming** through the senior center, Parks & Recreation, or other organizations.

AFT: Parks and Rec; COA

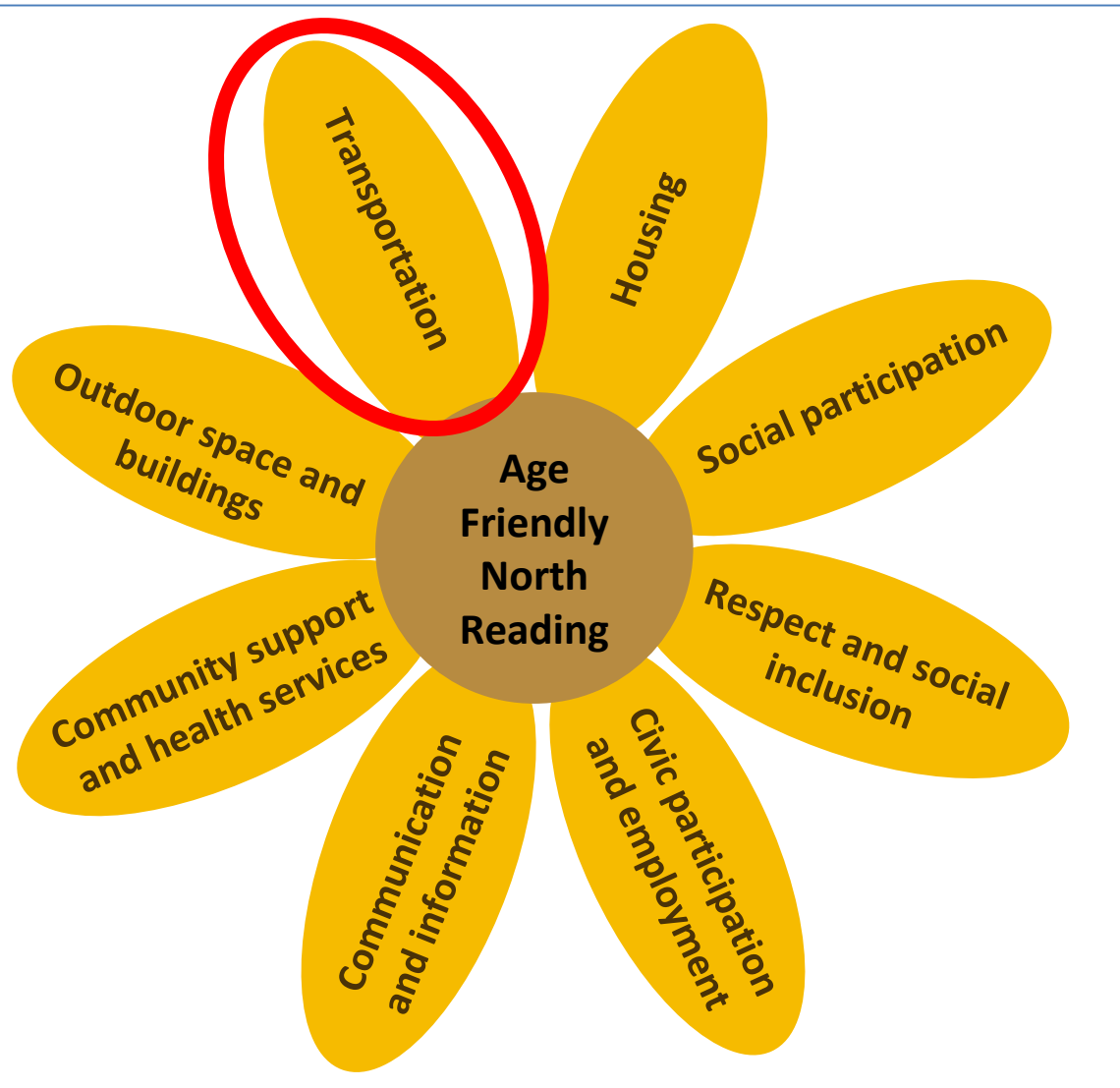
AFT: Forest Committee

AFT: Commission on Disabilities

- Promote **ADA compliance** among Town amenities

AFT: Commission on Disabilities

- Redouble efforts to **implement recommendations** from existing project/plans that will promote access to public spaces—including projects meant to enhance accessibility. As these plans are implemented, re-examine action items to maximize age- friendliness.

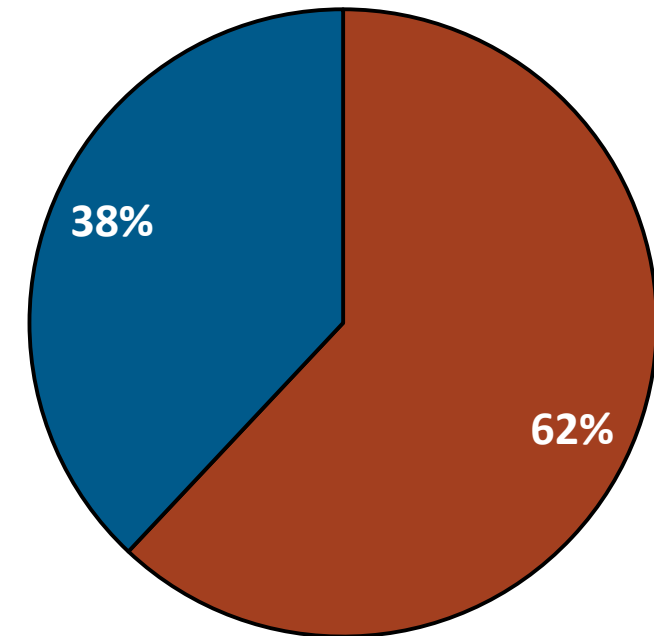


TRANSPORTATION

Transportation: Needs

- **Segments missed, cancelled, or rescheduled a medical appointment** in the last year due to of a lack of transportation:
 - 19% of non-drivers
 - 13% of those who limit driving
 - 15% of those with participation limitations

Satisfaction with transportation options



- Not at all/slightly satisfied
- Somewhat/very satisfied

“I don’t plan to age in place in North Reading for a variety of reasons. Mainly, there is no transportation. If you can drive, great. If you cannot drive, you’re stuck.”

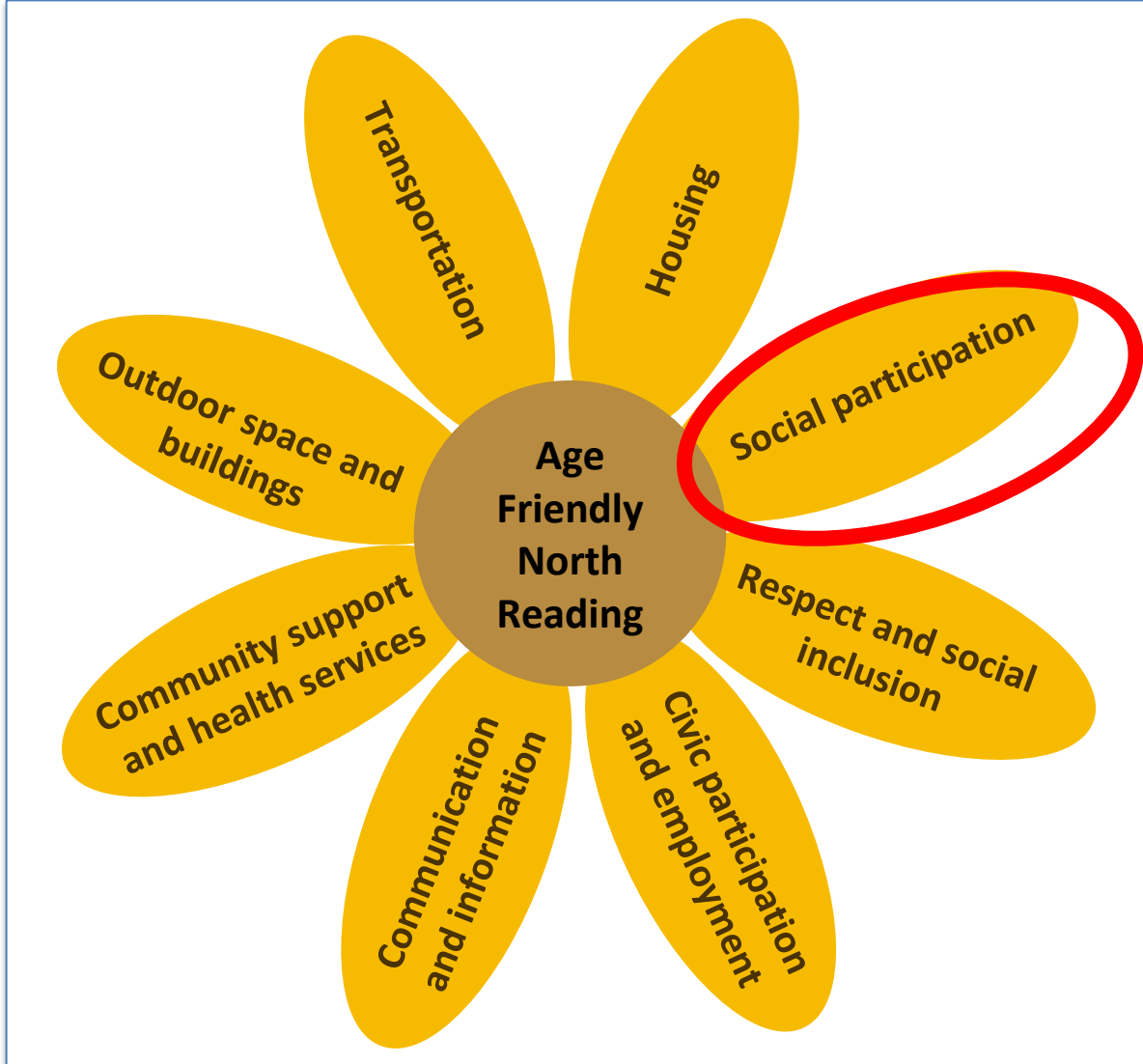
- Focus Group Participant

Transportation: Ideas for Action

- Expand the **Senior Center vehicle fleet** and offer extended hours and on-demand services.
- Develop a **ride-share option** for older adults.
 - Consider a model like Newton's NewMo on-demand service
- Consider the formation of a transportation committee that would use the current traffic study to assess the **feasibility of a North Reading shuttle service** moving residents through the Town on a scheduled loop connecting crucial destinations.
- Explore ways to form a **regional partnership** with nearby communities for transportation services.

AFT: Create a New Transportation Committee

- **Consolidate current MVRTA, MBTA and Senior Center Transportation initiatives into one committee for greater focus and effectivity**

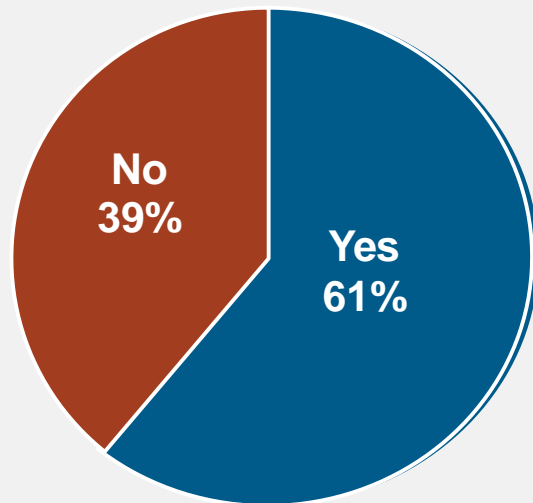


SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Part 1

Social Participation: Needs Part 1

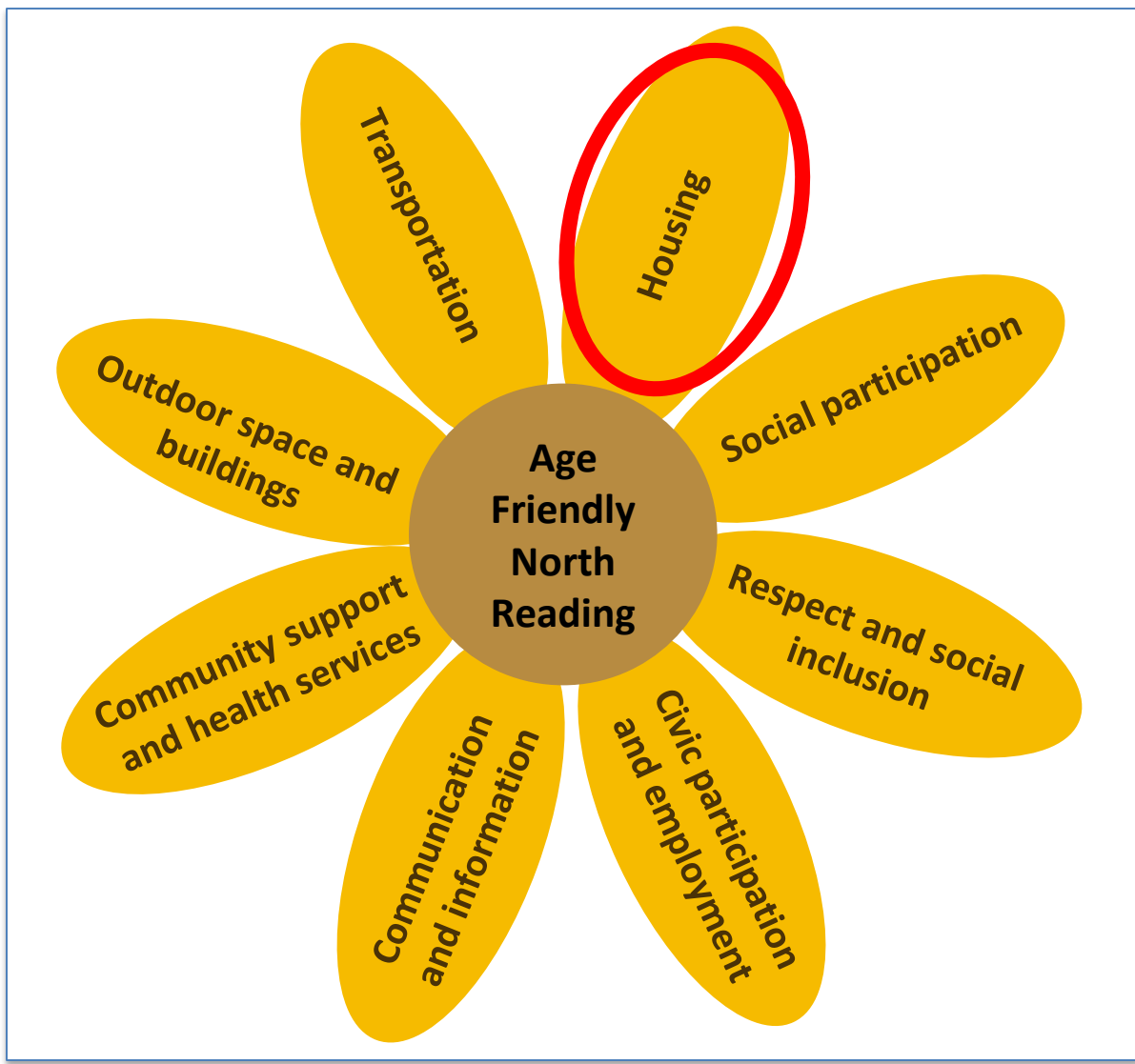
Would you ask a neighbor for help if you needed assistance with a minor task or errand?



- **10% do not know anyone living with 30 minutes on whom they can rely for help—** indicating a small, but important segment who are vulnerable to social isolation

Social Participation Part 1: Ideas for Action

- Organize an array of **remote learning options** available through the internet and/or smartphones only requiring cell service. The library's programming might be a solid platform for expansion. **AFT: Adult Learning Committee**
- **Partner with the high school** to offer affordable concerts and learning engagement opportunities for older adults. **AFT: Adult Learning Committee**
- Develop a plan for **reaching out to isolated and at-risk older adults** (e.g., send birthday cards to all residents age 85+ including information about available resources) **AFT: Project 500 Committee**
- Identify neighborhood-based programs or mechanisms to **strengthen informal networks in neighborhoods** and ensure that existing neighborhood-based activities are inclusive of older residents. **AFT: Project 500 Committee**
- Educate community organizations and faith communities about whom to contact if they identify someone who may be **at risk of social isolation.** **ATF: Project 500 Comm.**



HOUSING

Housing: Needs

- **39%** of survey respondents reported that their current home does not have a **bathroom and bedroom on the first floor.**
- **34%** of respondents need **home modifications for safety**, and 7% of these can't afford them.
- **12%** cannot take care of **home maintenance** (eg snow removal, yard work).
- If they had to move, **those under age 80** would prefer a condo, townhome, or 55+ community. Assisted living preferred by the **80+ population.**

“A condo with a first floor bedroom and bath may be more acceptable. There are many condos if I go north, but I would lose my friends and they will not drive north at their age”

-Survey Respondent

“Real estate taxes keep going up. I heard seniors can sometimes get a discount—but where is the information?”

-Survey Respondent

Housing: Ideas for Action

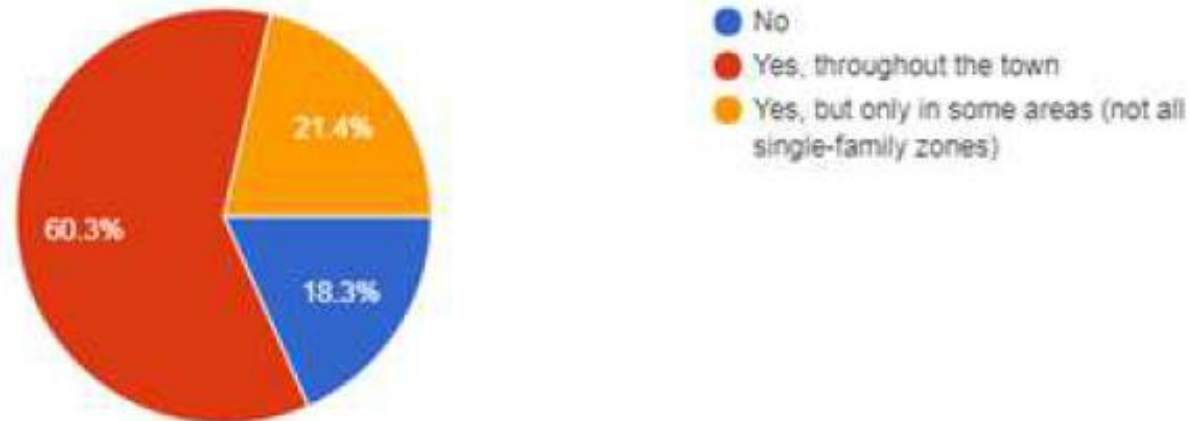
- Vet a list of **trusted repair people**, contractors, and service people for hire for older homeowners who need help maintaining or repairing their homes, or renovating them to be more safe. **AFT: Project 500**
- **Educate older residents** about existing aging-in-place resources such as accessory dwelling units, tax deferrals, or even reverse mortgages.
 - **AFT: ADU via CPC (in process)**
 - **AFT: Tax Deferrals via Tax Committee**
- Review the recommendations from the recent **Housing Production Plan and Master Plan** to identify and advocate for priorities consistent with age-friendly goals.
 - **AFT...**

MAPC Housing Production Plan 2018 Takeaways

Accessory Dwelling Units

Do you think the town should allow accessory apartments (or "in-law" apartments) in parts of town that are now restricted to single-family houses?

786 responses



A large majority of respondents, 60.3%, agreed that accessory apartments should become available throughout town while 21.4% indicated that such units should be allowed but in select locations, not in all single-family zones. Only 18.3% opposed the permitting of accessory units.

MAPC Housing Production Plan 2018 Takeaways

- ▶ Population projections indicate 16,500 residents by 2030 with continuing losses of children and substantial gains in older residents with those 65+ doubling in number.
- ▶ Seniors/increasing population with significant cost burdens, more living alone.
 - ▶ Need opportunities to affordably downsize in less isolated settings
 - ▶ Intergenerational housing opportunities
 - ▶ Barrier-free units
 - ▶ Lower maintenance demands
 - ▶ Supportive services
 - ▶ Greater community connections
 - ▶ Walkability

Both population and household growth projections suggest that there are growing numbers of smaller households with increasing numbers headed by adults in the 30 to 44 age range and those 60 years or older. Many of these households will likely prefer smaller units in more diverse settings that incorporate amenities and walkability.



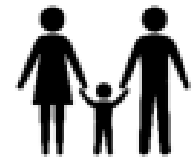



“Projected population suggest the need for housing alternatives to accommodate the increasing population of seniors and their lifestyle changes [plus] more affordable starter housing opportunities to attract young adults, including young families, should be promoted to reduce significant losses of this segment that adds so much vitality to the community.”

MAPC Housing Production Plan 2018 Takeaways

- **Goal: 152 affordable housing units**
 - Current inventory is 540 SHI
- **80% Rentals/20% ownership**
 - will help meet the needs of younger singles and couples, empty nesters, and seniors who are part of our community to return and/or remain within our community.
 - Attention! 406 Edgewood SHI units will expire in 2038

Master Plan 2020 Takeaway

OVERARCHING HOUSING GOALS

OVERARCHING HOUSING GOALS	LEGEND	DESCRIPTION
Implementation		Ensure Implementation of the North Reading Housing Production Plan
Housing for Seniors		Provide affordable and appropriate housing for seniors that allows them to remain in North Reading
Housing for Families		Reduce overall housing costs and provide Affordable Housing for young families
Housing for Cost Burdened Households		Meet the needs of cost burdened households
Housing Options		Provide a variety of housing options that increase naturally occurring affordable housing
Housing Supporting Other Plan Elements		Use housing to support economic development, transportation, environmental, and other plan goals

MAPC Housing Production Plan 2018 Takeaways

Community Housing Forum (Appendix 3)

~ 50 people

Top 3 Votes

1. Promote **mixed use development** and a new downtown
2. Allocate a percentage of the Berry **property proceeds for affordable housing???** **~\$7.8M?**
3. Collaborate with town boards and committees on issue of affordable housing

Community Housing Survey (Appendix 4)

Invited 5427

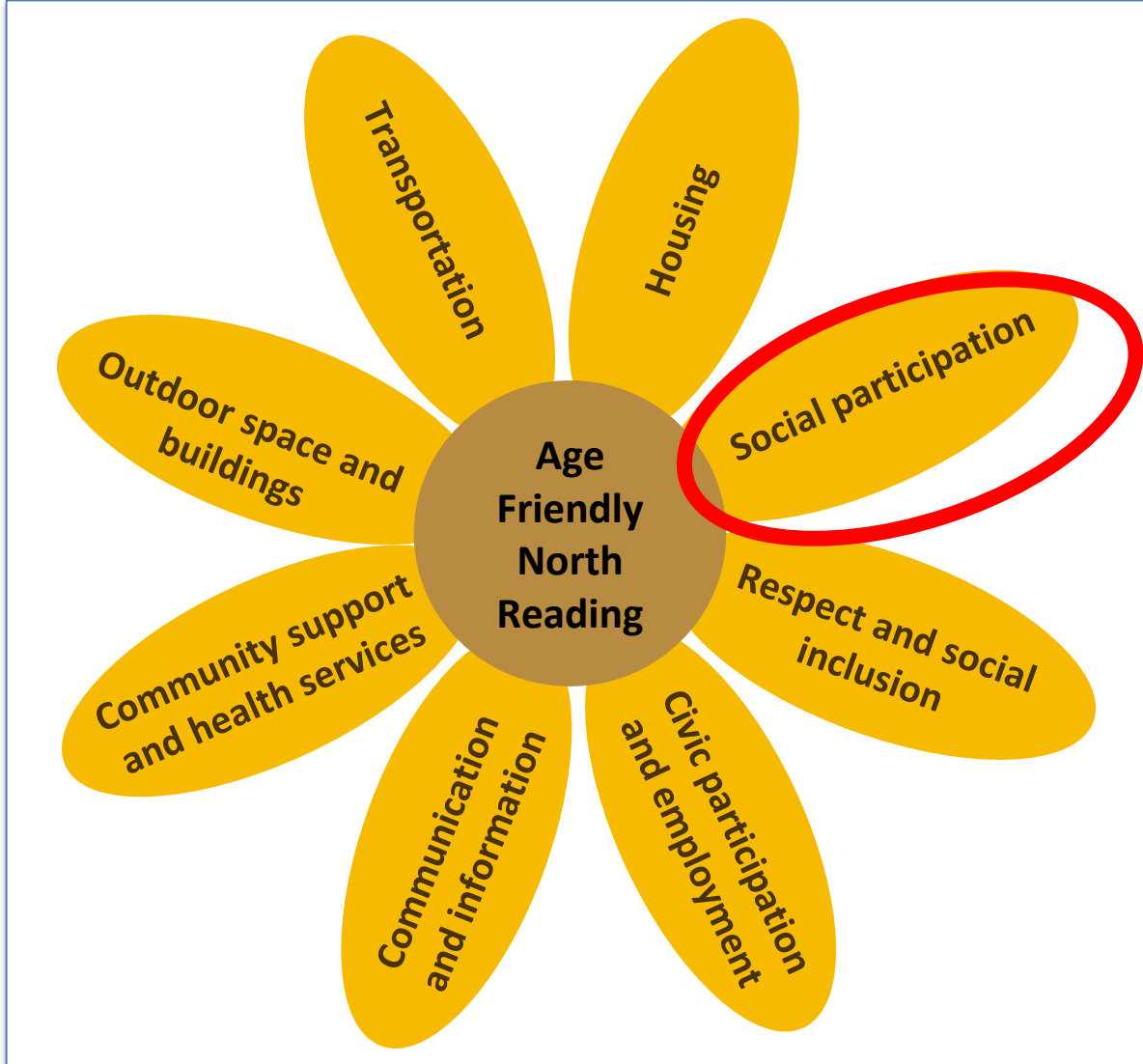
Participants 806

In general, respondents **expressed significant concern regarding housing affordability** with **strong interest in developing a vibrant mixed-use town center** and creating more affordable housing options for young families looking for starter homes and empty nesters hoping to downsize in the community.

#1 location for mixed use development was Main Street/Route 28.

High-frequency representative comments:

- Importance of having a **vital downtown or Town Center with more density, retail options and other amenities that within walking distance to new housing,**
- Need more housing options and services for seniors, recognizing that they are the ones who built this community.
- Remedy lack of sewer.

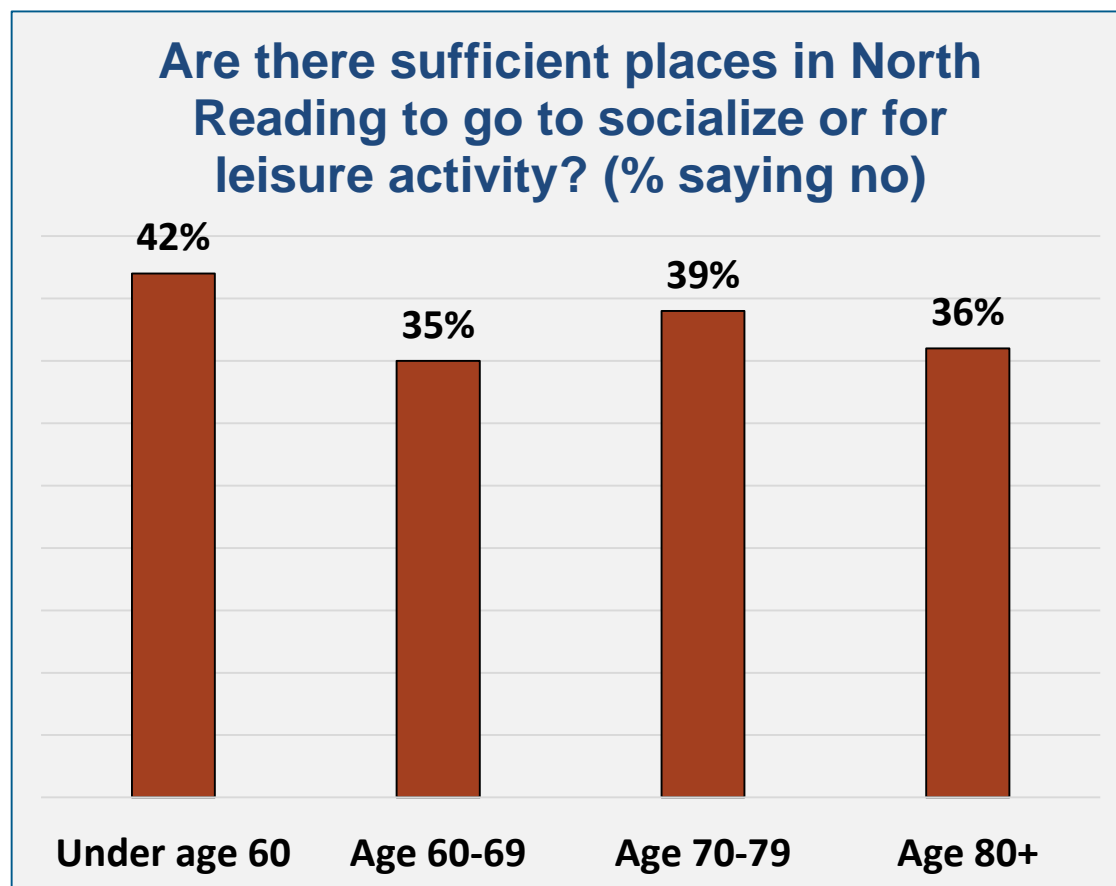


SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Part 2

Social Participation Part 2: desire for gathering space

- The most commonly cited preference was for a physical space to gather as a **community**.
 - 29% of respondents mentioned the desire for a physical space to gather socially and otherwise



“would love to see a gathering place to have coffee, play cards, chat, open to all”
—survey respondent

“wish we had a better village setting...our town center is pretty lame...”
—survey respondent

“we are in need of a place for multigenerational use. It would add so much to the community by bringing different ages together. People helping people...”
—survey respondent

Social Participation Part 2:

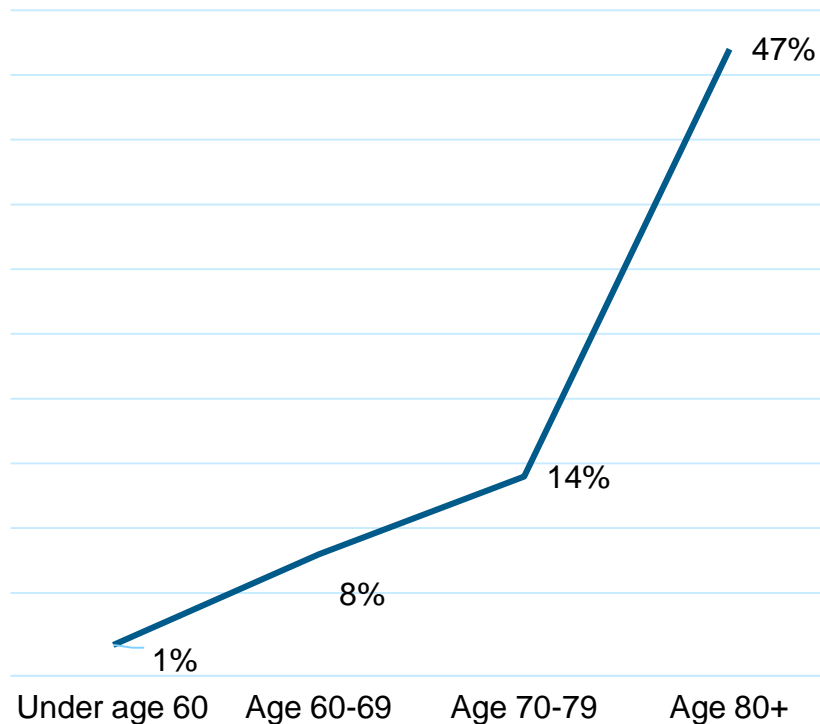
Preference for physical and intellectual growth

Activities suggested include:	
Expanded exercise programs and walking paths	<i>Low cost exercise classes for 55+</i>
	<i>Walking trails, bike trails joining other towns nearby.</i>
Skill-building activities	<i>Would love to see a “maker space” or a place to learn a craft</i>
	<i>Intro woodworking class</i>
Lifelong learning	<i>“college classes” for seniors in academics or the arts</i>
	<i>Cultural programs, cooking classes</i>

The North Reading Senior Center

Low participation (except by age 80+)

Percentage who have been
to the NR Senior Center



Reasons for not participating

- *“I have been told that the average is far older than me (63)...and that I would feel out of place.”*
- *“They don’t seem to offer programs for a very active senior.”*
- *“It is often too crowded to participate in exercise classes.”*
- *“Senior center is ... (outdated; awful; decrepit; too small).”*
- *“Programs not on a par with other cities and towns.”*

New Intergenerational Community Center

- Create a new **Intergenerational Community Center**
 - Combines Senior Center, Youth Services, Park and Rec, and Vet Services
 - Not a new idea and has general support
 - Cost unknown but estimate \$5M???
 - Currently resides with **Land Utilization Committee** and **Facility Master Planning Committee**

MAPC Master Plan 2020

GOAL 17: ENSURE FACILITIES MEET COMMUNITY AND DEPARTMENTAL NEEDS.

STRATEGY 17A - Develop new department facilities and infrastructure capable of meeting current service needs and projected future demand, in accordance with the anticipated Facilities Master Plan

RECOMMENDATION 17.1.1 – Continue planning for an intergenerational community center, to include selected Town offices as well as a senior and youth center. Consider a location that is central, accessible, and compatible with the uses proposed to be contained within it, and has good synergy with its surroundings.

RECOMMENDATION 17.1.2 – Consider a more centrally located Town Hall, potentially exploring a Main Street location to improve resident access and convenience.

Observations on Community Center Model: Lexington (2015), Swampscott (2015) and, Randolph (2017), Salem (2019)

- Challenging to build **intergenerational programming**
 - Salem Community Life Center: close to 100% of the people who participate are age 60+, visions of multiple generations joining is still evolving
 - Swampscott's plans included shared space and programming that has not come to fruition, lots of untapped potential
- **Branding** is important to increase appeal:
 - Lexington Community Center: sees increasing participation among younger seniors
 - Salem Community Life Center: early stages of changing their image in the community
- **Lesson:** successful effort = more participants and wider age range
 - Leading to **growing demand**
 - Randolph's center houses programming and services for children, teens, adults, and seniors—lots of coordination and multiple staff teams
 - Lexington says: in the first 2 years of opening there were
 - approximately 4,000 new seniors participating

Infrastructure Needed for Social Participation

- What does Andover, Reading and Stoneham all have in common that we don't ? 2 answers.
 1.
Hint: it brings people together
 2.
Hint: it ain't pretty, it is very important and we need it.

New "Downtown" Village

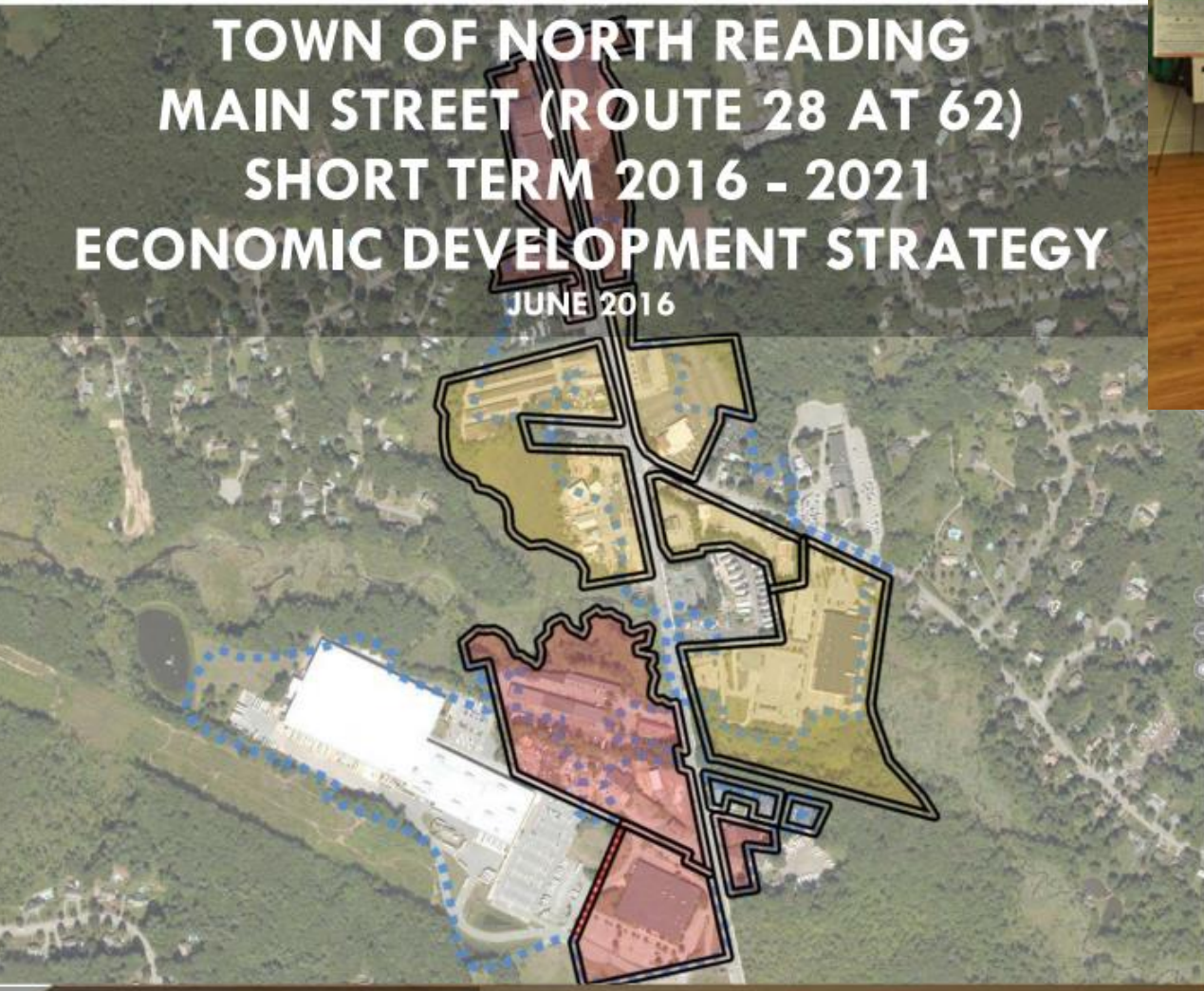
"I've lived in town for 40 years. Over the years, I've watched as the town centers in Andover and Reading have thrived and grown. I'd always hoped a similar change would happen here too, and it's been disappointing that it never has."

QUOTE FROM PARTICIPATING RESIDENT – OCTOBER 30, 2018

- Create a new **Community Center aka Downtown Village**
“a place where everyone knows your name”
- Some key elements are required to create a thriving mixed-use development:
 - **Retail Follows Roofs**
 - Retail can include boutiques, personal services, restaurants , sports bars, open/closed marketplace
 - **A “There’s There”**
 - **Traffic Calming and Walkability**

MAPC ST Economic Development Strategic Plan 2016: Historical Perspective on a new Downtown Village

**TOWN OF NORTH READING
MAIN STREET (ROUTE 28 AT 62)
SHORT TERM 2016 - 2021
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
JUNE 2016**



MAPC ST Economic Development Strategic Plan 2016: Historical Perspective on a new Downtown Village

**SHOULD THE TOWN
REDESIGN ITS SEGMENT OF ROUTE 28
TO MAKE IT INTO A SLOWER-SPEED, WALKABLE MAIN STREET?**

- Consider past Town/Cecil Group study recommendations.

- There was a great consensus that the Town should pursue a roadway design

**ON WHICH 5 BLOCKS DO YOU WANT
TO SEE DEVELOPMENT HAPPEN SOONER?**

- Participants overwhelmingly chose Block 9 (existing Stop and Shop area)

**WOULD YOU SUPPORT MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL
AS AN ALLOWED, BY-RIGHT USE IN THIS DISTRICT?**

- Meaning, mixed-use upper-story residential and/or condos, apartments, and townhouses?
 - Market analysis suggests "roofs come before ^{more/better} retail"

- Participants overwhelmingly said yes in favor of amending the zoning

**SHOULD THE TOWN INVEST IN "PUTTING A THERE, THERE"
BY CREATING A PUBLIC, CIVIC INDOOR/OUTDOOR GATHERING SPACE
AROUND WHICH PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT COULD CLUSTER?**

- Examples could include: relocating Town Hall or post office facility, municipal parking lot with a pocket park or hardscaped plaza, or senior or community center

- The majority voted in support of the idea

**SHOULD THE TOWN OR PROPERTY OWNERS ADDRESS
LACK OF WASTEWATER CAPACITY
THROUGH A SHARED "SEWER PACKAGE TREATMENT PLANT"?**

- Participants responded overwhelmingly in support of the idea

MAPC ST Economic Development Strategic Plan 2016: Historical Perspective on a new Downtown Village

- examine zoning in order to facilitate the production of much-needed multi-family units Town-wide and specifically for the Study Area;
- invest in creating a pleasant Main Street streetscape (with sidewalks and traffic calming improvements) in conjunction with creating a recognizable Town center featuring a civic facility (potentially a relocated Town Hall) and/or open space in order to encourage adjacent clustered, retail development and allow residents to gather;
- facilitate mixed-use retail and multifamily development in order to promote walkability and sense of place; and

- Retail Gap is significant
- Most leisure money is leaving town.
- We can handle an additional 6 restaurant plus retail/personal services

Figure 12 Brief Summary of Retail Market Analysis
with Study Area in Town Context, and Buildout Analysis Parcels



Master Plan 2020 Perspective on a new Downtown Village



Planning Process, Outreach & Participation

BRIEF OVERVIEW

- 4 public workshops (including senior event)
- 2 Advisory Group meetings
- Select Board – future
- builds upon past studies
- tax bill notice 5,000 households
- paid Facebook advertisements: 2 months, 14,400 reached, 45,071 “impressions”, 501 link clicks, 129 from seniors
- the Patch, Town website, posters, emails
- participation: 554-survey respondents, 1 to 4 dozen workshop participants, 15-member Advisory Group, Town staff

*technical assistance provided by the
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)*

prepared for:

TOWN OF NORTH READING
COMMUNITY PLANNING COMMISSION
DANIELLE MCKNIGHT, AICP, TOWN PLANNER/COMMUNITY PLANNING ADMINISTRATOR
235 NORTH MAIN STREET

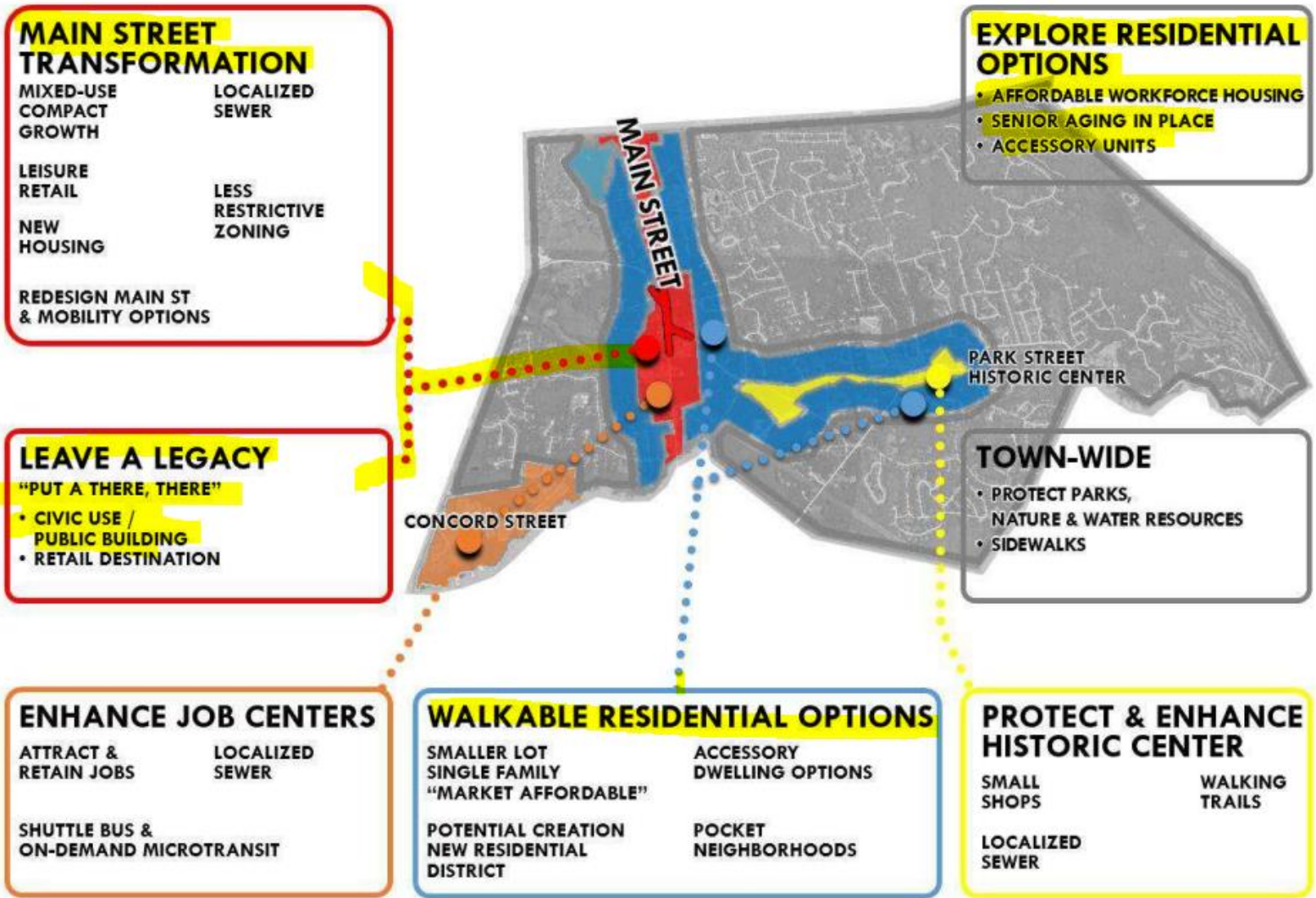
Master Plan 2020 Perspective on a new Downtown Village

Overarching Consensus Goals

Subsequent chapters or “elements” of the Master Plan will recommend a variety of recommendations, goals and strategies based on community input. The following is a brief preview of some of the goals and strategies that garnered more interest and support.

- **ATTRACT PRIVATE INVESTMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT** with desired uses and traditional walkable Main Street streetscape form.
- **MAKE DESIRED LEISURE-RETAIL AND NEEDED CONDO/APARTMENTS VIABLE** by investing-in and/or supporting wastewater infrastructure.
- **CREATE A SHOPPING DISTRICT WITH LEISURE RETAIL** uses along an inviting streetscape with outdoor seating areas, and upper-story homes and offices (that reinforce ground-floor retail uses).
- **ADDRESS HOUSING DEMAND BY ALLOWING MORE OPTIONS** (including market-rate small lots/dwellings) that also enliven mixed-use/retail developments.
- **CREATE ATTRACTIVE ROADWAY AND NEW ROBUST TOWN CENTER** to attract private investment and desired development type.
- **MAKE ZONING CLEARER** to allow desired and/or needed uses, as well as compact, vertically-integrated mixed-use that can eventually help support goals such as local mass transit, affordable housing, and leisure retail.
- **SUPPORT WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE** to in turn support desired physical landscape and uses along Route 28.
- **PROTECT DRINKING WATER QUALITY** by preventing runoff and contamination.
- **ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** by attracting more retail, commercial/ office and light industrial development in order to ease the residential tax base.

Master Plan 2020 Perspective on a new Downtown Village

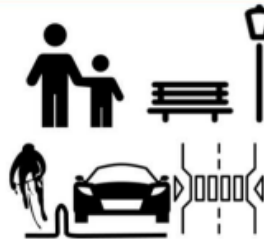


Master Plan 2020 Perspective on a new Downtown Village

KEY INTERRELATED CHALLENGES & GOALS - *putting the pieces together*



LOCALIZED SEWER
SUPPORT DESIRED GOALS



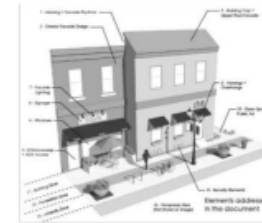
STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS



CLEARER ZONING



DESIRED JOBS & BUSINESSES



DESIGN GUIDELINES



LEISURE RETAIL
CONDUCTIVE TO SOCIALIZATION



HOUSING SUPPORTS RETAIL



CIVIC ANCHOR
INDOOR/OUTDOOR, "PUT A THERE, THERE"
CONSOLIDATED, RELOCATED PUBLIC FACILITY?



ADDRESS HOUSING DEMAND

Downtown Village Concept

Paved and green open spaces face the intersection and a community building backs up to Martin's Brook. Retail faces Main St., the intersection, and a new retail street. Parking lots are "hidden" behind buildings.



NORTH READING TOWN CENTER STUDY

FEBRUARY, 2021

- **Private/ Public Partnership**
- **Economics**
 - \$50K?
 - \$200K PT
 - ~\$1.6M?
- **Sewer vs Package Treatment Plant?**
 - Oct 2022
 - 2026
 - \$3M



IGCC Location: IRP or Downtown?

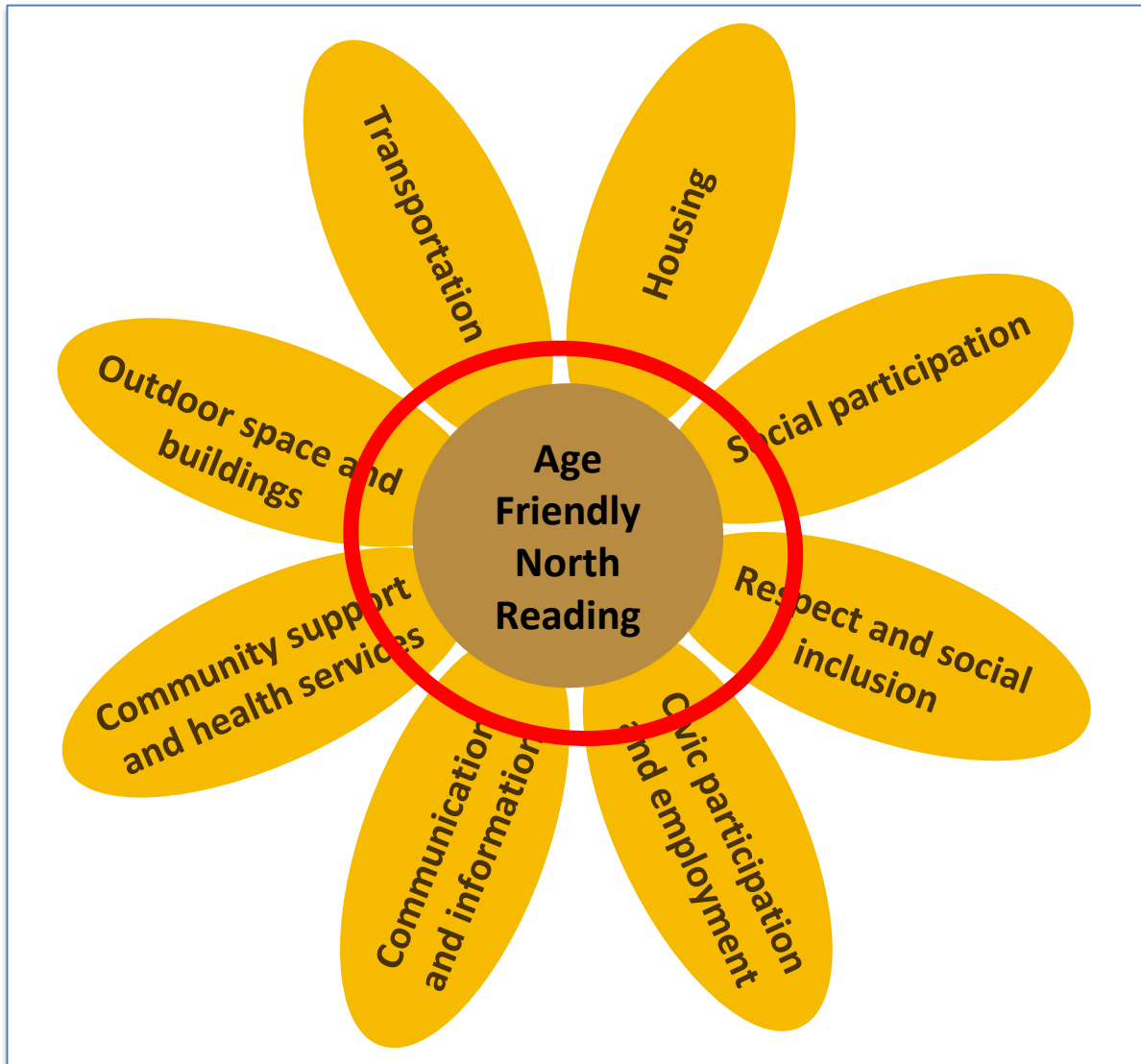
Common opinion? IRP (town owned land)

Why locate IGCC in Downtown Village instead?

- People are not isolated; part of the downtown village scene
- No need to build out or furnish an expensive \$\$\$ café/Kitchen
- No need to staff or supply for café/kitchen \$\$\$
- Parents/bus can drop off kids at IGCC while they shop, exercise, dine and socialize
- No need to build out an \$\$\$ septic system at IRP. Tap into pkg treatment plant or sewer line instead.
- **Add Town Hall to IGCC?**
 - Frees up ~4 acres buildable lots ~\$1M
 - Consolidates most town functions into one building
 - Creates a thriving “there’s there”

Bottom line?

- MAPC studies based on participant input supports it
- IGCC location is a debatable issue, not a forgone conclusion



AGE FRIENDLY NORTH READING ACTION PLAN

Priority Areas for Age-friendly North Reading

- **Economic Security**
 - Property tax relief
 - Aside from new development, policies like zoning or accessory dwelling unit allowances can create downsizing options
- **Transportation**
 - Walking paths, sidewalks, connectivity to downtown
 - Consider persons with disabilities or those who limit their driving as possible targets
- **Participation**
 - in the form of the Senior Center or Community Center—a place to gather
- **Communication**
 - Strategy for both formal and informal ways of sharing information so that older residents and their families know what resources are available

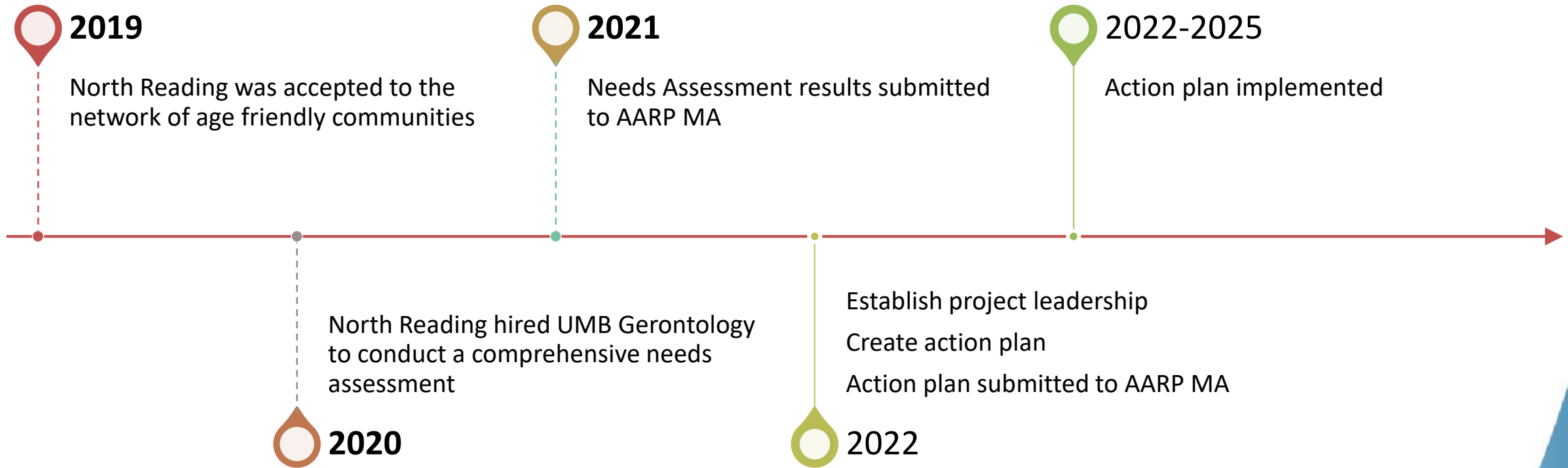
Best Practices for an Age Friendly Initiatives

- Having an “anchor” organization to propel efforts and contribute to sustainability
 - Cape Ann: Senior Care (ASAP)
 - Swampscott: COA and Steering Committee
 - Salem: City Hall and Steering Committee(s)
- Paid staff/resources:
 - Cape Ann: AF coordinator
 - Swampscott: COA director
 - Salem: Mayor’s Chief of Staff
- Cultivate a Steering Committee:
 - Range of expertise relevant to sectors/domains
 - Including relevant municipal departments allows for coordination between other efforts

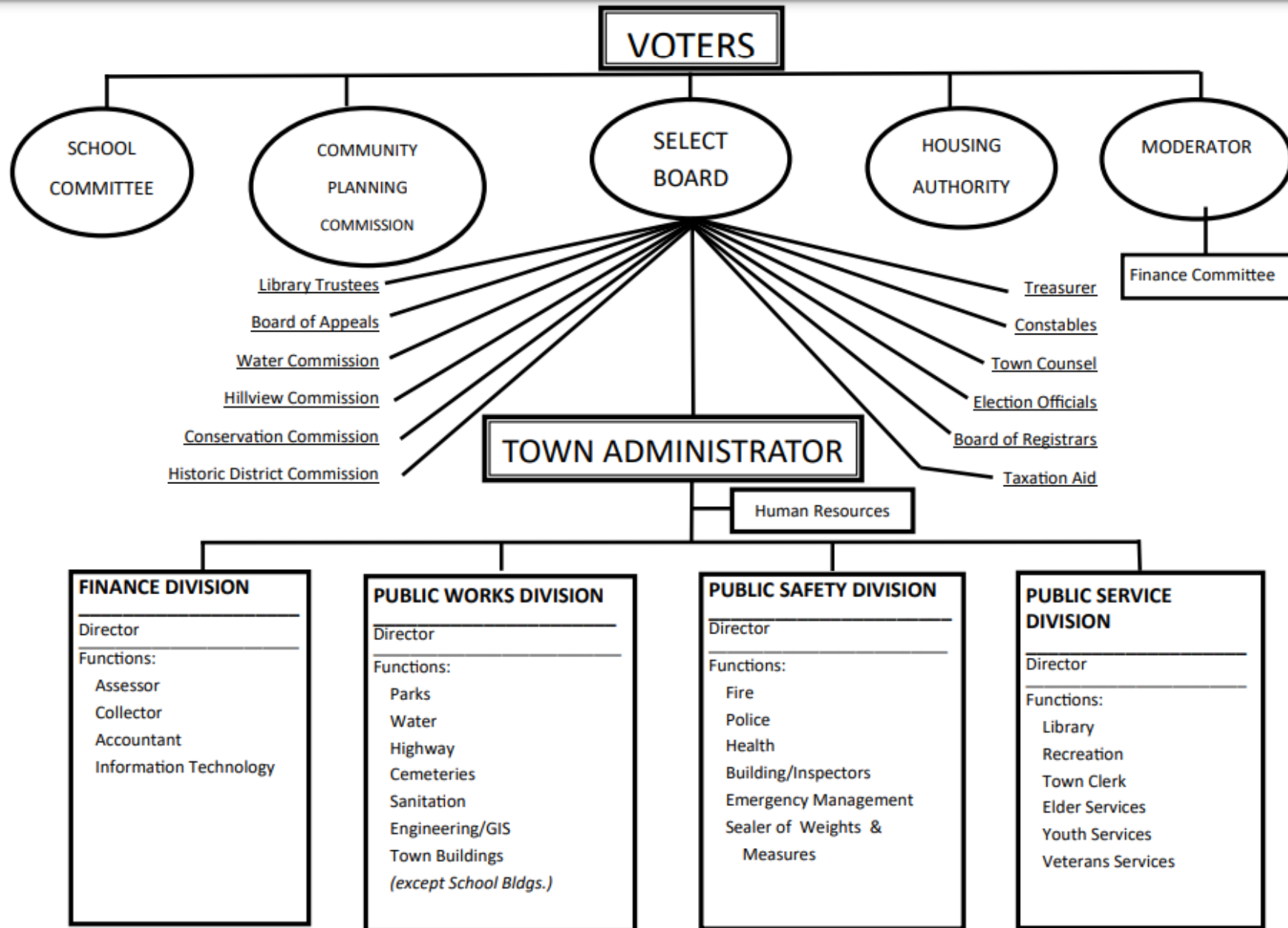
Next steps for the Age Friendly North Reading Initiative:

- Establish leadership for the initiative
 - **A project coordinator** **AFT: hire new Age Friendly Director**
 - **An anchor organization** **AFT: create a new Age Friendly Task Force**
 - **A Steering Committee** **AFT: create a new Age Friendly Task Force**
- Develop an action plan that includes:
 - **Action steps, possible collaborators, estimated timeline and “outputs”**
 - **Submission to AARP MA is recommended 1 year from the completion of the assessment**
- Continue having a public presence and facilitating community conversations and events around livability and aging
- Implement the action steps laid out in the plan (3 years)

Progress to-date and future plan



North Reading Organizational Chart



Suggested Action Plan – Personnel and Committees

FINANCE DIVISION
Director
Functions:
Assessor
Collector
Accountant
Information Technology

PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION
Director
Functions:
Parks
Water
Highway
Cemeteries
Sanitation
Engineering/GIS
Town Buildings (except School Bldgs.)

PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION
Director
Functions:
Fire
Police
Health
Building/Inspectors
Emergency Management
Sealer of Weights & Measures

PUBLIC SERVICE DIVISION
Director
Functions:
Library
Recreation
Town Clerk
Elder Services
Youth Services
Veterans Services

Funding
Earmark ~ \$200K
from new Pulte
property tax
revenue of ~\$3M

Hire
Social Services (Director)
Age Friendly(Coordinator)

New Committees

- Create a new **Age Friendly Task Force** (to ensure fulfillment of *all* Age Friendly objectives including new downtown village (by 2026), housing plan, and IGCC (TBD))
- Consolidate existing MBTA, MVRTA and COA initiatives into a new **Transportation Committee**
- Create a new **Project 500 Committee**
- Create a new **Volunteer Committee**
- Create a new **Adult Learning Committee**

Related Committees Forest, LUC, FMPC, Comm. On Disabilities, Tax Aid, CIT

For more information, please contact:

Caitlin E. Coyle, PhD

Research Fellow, Adjunct Assistant Professor

Caitlin.Coyle@umb.edu | 617.287.7467

[Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging](#)
[Gerontology Institute](#)

[John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies](#)
University of Massachusetts Boston

Rich Wallner

richwallner1@gmail.com